University of Alberta

A Woman's Place
Female Labour Migration in Senegal

By Kim Baalbaki

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of
The requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Anthropology

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *A Woman's Place: Female Labour Migration in Senegal*, submitted by Kim Baalbaki in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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September 27, 2001

This thesis is dedicated to my family; that collection of people who not only encourage and support my work, they give it meaning.

Abstract

Migration has become a way of life for rural women of Senegal. However, the role a woman plays in relation to the migratory process varies between communities. In recent decades the migration of young single girls and women to Dakar to take up employment as domestic workers has become increasingly widespread and in some communities it is almost institutionalized. Migration is a social process and as such it is organized according to certain beliefs, customs, values, and practices of a population. Rural women of Senegal play an active role in the shaping of this process, but their lives are also shaped by it. This thesis attempts to understand and characterize some of the variation in feminine migration patterns that exists and how this affects a woman's experience.

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I would like to show my appreciation to the people who in some way helped bring this research to full fruition. Many people have directly or indirectly encouraged, inspired, or supported me over the years and it would be impossible to list every person who has affected the outcome of this work in big or small ways. Therefore, in these acknowledgements I will only attempt to make mention of those people most closely associated with the research.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge that although this thesis has been inspired by many, the flaws and failings are entirely my own. I am restricted by my own limitations and no responsibility belongs to those mentioned above.

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Introduction

Rural women of Senegal are differentially engaged in the process of migration to urban areas. In some communities women migrate as independent labourers; in other communities women remain in the rural areas while their husbands migrate, going to the city only in order to reunite their family. Whatever the case, migration has become an integral part of rural life in Senegal and it affects not only those who go, but those who remain. Migration, in this context, is not only an economic endeavour of individuals, but a social institution that is incorporated, maintained, and transformed through social processes, practices, and relationships. Thus, 'a woman's place', in regards to a socially constructed gender role and in regards to the physical and social place where this role is acted out, affects and is affected by migration.

The purpose of this thesis is to elucidate how culturally diverse communities in Senegal have integrated migration into their social structure in different ways and how this in turn has implications for rural women and the nature of their lives. I will do this by examining the experiences of one category of female rural-urban migrants, namely, migrant domestic workers. Most female labour migrants in Senegal will enter the workforce as domestic workers (Sy 1991: 30). By focusing on this category of women some generalizations about the character of feminine labour migration in Senegal can be made. However, at the same time, the participants' accounts of their lives reveal particularities that highlight the diversity of migrants' experiences. This diversity reflects personal circumstances, but many of these circumstances are related to the social contexts of the migrants. In Senegal, the social context of rural migrants to the city is, in most cases, heavily embedded in relationships and structures that extend from the village,

thereby creating cultural continuities between the village and the city that differentiate migrants' experiences in the city in relation to their ethnicity. Although the focus of this research is on women who do migrate in search of labour, the absence of women from some ethnic groups in this category is telling and will also be examined.

Rural to urban migration in Senegal is a trend that has its roots in the beginning of the nineteenth century, with various factors accumulating into what is presently considered to be a situation of some concern. Rapid population growth, the transformation of subsistence agriculture into mono-crop agriculture, low and capricious market prices, dependence on imported goods, structural adjustment programs, and drought have all contributed to the erosion of rural life. With few earning opportunities in the village and an increasing desire for monetary income and the goods that money can buy, a common response to this rural crisis has been the movement of people.

It would not be an overstatement to remark that rural life in Senegal cannot be fully understood without an awareness of migration and its impact. Any study focusing solely on the local geography and the population at hand would elide an entire dimension of rural life; the dynamics of rural communities today include people both present and absent. The Serer of Senegal have a proverb, "A family without a migrant cannot be rich," that illustrates the value placed on such an institution (Mbodj, 1998:61). A generalized description of migration in Senegal, however, would be a difficult undertaking. Migration in Senegal is marked most by its diversity. Movement may be from one village to another, to an urban centre or even to another country. It may be seasonal, temporary or permanent. It may involve young, single persons and/or older married persons, men and/or women. As studies of migration in Senegal have shown

(e.g. Diop 1965; Lambert 1994; Traore 1994; Thiam et al. 1999), variations in the configuration of migration are associated with the village of origin. The variations are related to the environmental and socio-economic circumstances of the village, but they are also related to the particular beliefs, values, and practices of that community.

Rural communities in Senegal have, to varying degrees, maintained a level of ethnic and cultural homogeneity. There are many distinct ethnic groups in Senegal, but five major ethnic groups make up ninety percent of the population. These are, in order of numerical significance, the Wolof, Haal Pulaar, Serer, Diola, and Mande. Of course, these classifications obscure inherent complexities of ethnicity in Senegal; for example, the Haal Pulaar can be subdivided into the Tukulor, Fulbe, and Laobe, while the Mande are divided into the Soninke and Manding (Diouf 1994: 15-17). Furthermore, individual identity with an ethnic group is, at times, ambiguous.

Female migration in Senegal is especially susceptible to cultural configurations of the migration process. Whether or not a woman will migrate independently, what pattern this migration will follow, and what resources are available to her should she migrate are related to her community's construction of gender and its organization of social relations and structures that sustain migration. In those communities where women do migrate to the city for employment, the decision to migrate is usually their own. Twenty-four out of twenty-six women in this study said they made the decision independently. However, it would be misleading to present the decision entirely as human agency, let alone individual human agency. Claims to agency must be tempered with consideration of the social, economic and physical environment that limit and influence the scope of a person's choice. Historical events such as colonialism, Senegal's position in the global

economy, environmental conditions, and the sexual division of labour all influence the course of a woman's life. Women are active participants in these processes and help to shape their surroundings and define their positions, but they do so from within a web of relations and structures that impose specific meaning on their actions (see Bourdieu 1978; Sahlins 1981).

Research with women who migrate from rural villages to Senegal's capital city Dakar in search of employment as domestic workers informs a number of issues. As migrants, these women embody the connection that exists between the rural and urban areas of Senegal. They not only move between the two spaces, they reconfigure those spaces and create a social geography that can only be understood in terms of the social networks, transfer of goods, and communication of ideas that transcend the space and bind distant locales into a single system (Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Kearney 1991). As employees, they represent a mainly informal sector of labour that is vulnerable to mistreatment and exploitation. Their low socio-economic standing in comparison to urban women restricts their entry into the labour market and relegates them to the lowest paying occupations (see Young 1978). However, migrant women effectively use their subordinate position to secure some material benefits through client-patron relationships. As daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, friends, they embody the values and beliefs of their community and through their experiences and practices they reproduce and at times transform the meaning and function of migration and people's relation to this process.

The significance of this research lies in its ability highlight the diversity of migration patterns in Senegal and to give an in-depth account of the lives and perspectives of one category of migrant. It also contributes to the literature on African

women, which tends to treat diverse groups of women as a single category; and adds to knowledge of female migration in Senegal, which is relatively limited. Finally, it attempts to explain migration as a social process, and as a process influencing the shape of women's lives through cultural constructions of this process.

This thesis is organized into two parts. The first part provides the background to the research. It is divided into four chapters; the first is the literature review. This chapter looks at how anthropology has examined the issue of migration over the years. The theoretical framework from which migration is examined has altered as general paradigms of development and culture change have undergone transformations. This chapter serves to situate this research within the literature on migration in anthropology, but also within general research on migration in West Africa and on domestic work.

The second chapter focuses on the historical, social, and economic features that created conditions in rural areas promoting migration. The colonial system introduced a market economy, taxes, and cash crops and thus transformed the rural landscape and shifted agricultural production from a subsistence to a market orientation. Rapid population growth caused by improved health services and the use of vaccinations and medications created larger demands on rural resources such as food, water, and ultimately land. With independence came development programs and then structural adjustment programs meant to improve the economy and raise the standard of living, but which have since been seen as having mainly adverse effects on the most vulnerable sectors of society. Compounded with these factors, a series of fairly severe droughts during the 1970s and 80s triggered massive crop failures that threatened both the immediate welfare of the rural population, and their long-term sense of security. Entrance into the capitalist

economy has also increased the material expectations of people in rural areas. Manufactured household goods, furniture, and clothing are commodities that have become expectations of every village home. Education for children and improved infrastructure in the village such as electricity or more accessible water sources also come with a price tag and as the expectations of the rural populations rise so does their need for cash income, a limited resource in the village.

The next chapter provides a brief outline of the ethnic groups in Senegal. The relevance of ethnic identity in Senegalese society is discussed in general terms and in particular it is examined in terms of its correlation with variability in migration patterns. The two ethnic groups whose women do not migrate independently, the Mande and Haal Pulaar, are examined in more detail at this time as further discussion in this thesis focuses on the Diola, Serer, and Wolof women who migrate as domestic workers.

The final chapter of part one examines domestic work. Patterns of migrant domestic workers and conditions of domestic work internationally are outlined and compared to the situation in Senegal. A general description of domestic work in Senegal is given as a background to my own research, drawing mainly on a study of domestic workers, *Les mbindaan sans mbindou* (Diaw et al. 1996), carried out by a non-governmental organization, ENDA (Environment Development Action) Tiers-Monde.

Part two focuses on the description and analysis of data collected in my research. The first chapter in this section outlines general characteristics of the women who participated in this research and how they were selected. Conditions of domestic work in Senegal are described as they have been communicated by the women and through my

own observations. The significance of employer-employee relationships is also discussed and the unique configuration of relations in domestic work is examined.

Chapter six summarizes the motivations to migrate expressed by the respondents. This chapter is broken up into detailed examinations of seven categories of motivation. Motivations are analysed not only for the real conditions they describe, but also for what they say about the meaning of migration for the women and their communities. The discourse that surrounds migration reveals the social structures, relations, and values that shape the pattern of migration.

The following two chapters deal with material and conceptual links between the village and the city. Social networks, the exchange of ideas and goods, the movement of people, and the transformation of space link places and reproduce a cultural system that has no physical boundary. Conceptualizations of the village and the city are also telling. Positive and negative images of each are used as metaphors that describe a person's sense of place or feeling of security in relation to a geographical location. In addition, the prevalence and power of such images illustrate the women's sense of self as being both of the village and the city.

The final chapter examines how the cultural systems of each ethnic group affect the experiences of migrant domestic workers. How women organize themselves in the city greatly influences their ability to adapt to the new environment and to obtain the maximum benefits from their situation. Where women live, whom they live with, and what kind of social and material support they can draw from are affected by the social organization of their community. There are, in turn, consequences for the village as a

migrant's connection to the village and desire to return affect the social structure of rural communities and their access to income and other support from the city.

Each of our lives is limited and supported by a complex web of environmental, economic, political, social, and personal factors. For the people living in the rural communities of Senegal, this is no less true. Over the last several decades, a combination of factors has had the overall and increasing effect of making self-sustained subsistence a challenging proposition. For these communities, some form of migration has become an almost universal response to such difficult conditions. However, the character of migration across rural communities is far from universal. Whether or not an individual participates in some form of migration depends to a large degree on a number of factors, such as village of origin, ethnicity, sex, marital status, and age. These same factors also play a role in determining what types of migration are open. An examination of how rural women are affected by such factors provides a more complex account of female labour migration and its characteristics in Senegal.

Methodology

In order to understand how a woman's life is shaped and experienced, this thesis combines historical, anthropological, sociological, and demographic research on Senegal with twenty-six semi-structured interviews and observation of the living and working conditions of domestic workers in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. This methodology reflects my alliance with certain perspectives outlined in what has been called 'practice theory'. The pertinent aspects of this theory relevant to my research are described by Sherry Ortner (1994) in her evaluation of the development of practice theory.

> The newer practice theorists, on the other hand, share a view that "the system" (in a variety of senses to be discussed below) does in fact have very powerful, even "determining," effect upon human action and the shape of events (1994: 390)....
> As previously indicated, modern practice theory seeks to explain the relationship(s) that obtain between human action, on the one hand, and some global entity which we may call "the system," on the other (1994: 392)....
> The point is that practice anthropologists assume that society and history are not simply sums of ad hoc responses and adaptations to particular stimuli, but are governed by organizational and evaluative schemes. It is these (embodied, of course, within institutional, symbolic, and material forms) that constitute the system (1994: 392)....
> The system, further is not broken up into units like base and superstructure, or society and culture, but is rather a relatively seamless whole. An institution-say, a marriage system- is at once a system of social relations, economic arrangements, political processes, cultural categories, norms, values, ideals, emotional patterns, and so on and on (1994: 392)....

Given this frame of reference, the life, actions, and behaviour of a rural woman in Senegal can be understood in relation to the system, which includes the institution of migration, historical processes, social networks, etc.

As previously mentioned, the first part of this thesis lays out the background information drawn from other research; whereas the second part focuses on the results of this research. The information provided in the second part is derived from the data collected, unless otherwise referenced. The data collected for this research includes the narratives and perspectives of migrant domestic workers communicated in twenty-six semi-structured interviews. In addition, I was able to observe the working and living conditions of some women through my acquaintances and association with ENDA, an organization that continues to work with domestic workers in Dakar.

PART ONE

Chapter One

Literature Review

Migration

The study of migration within anthropology was largely a result of theoretical shifts in the 1950s and 60s that caused anthropologists to look at features of cultural production and social structure outside of the more traditional and physically bounded studies of small communities (Kearney 1986: 332). Up to this point, most contention in anthropological theory was centred on the framework and approach adopted in the study of a culture. The three main paradigms were that of British structural-functionalism, American cultural and psychocultural anthropology, and American evolutionist anthropology (Ortner 1994: 373-4). An ever more apparent distinction between ethnographic representation and contemporary reality, however, was making anthropology appear to be a narrow and antiquated field of enquiry (Asad 1975). The introduction of theories that focused on particular aspects of culture, such as the environment in cultural ecology (e.g. Steward 1955; White 1949), cultural images in symbolic anthropology (e.g. Geertz 1973; Turner 1967), or macro-economics in political economy (e.g. Schneider & Schneider 1976), created ethnographies that were no longer attempts to describe the integrated systems of a culture, but attempts to delineate specific entities or systems and to understand what relationship existed between them and a culture's composition, formation, and expression. This shift of anthropological thought transformed the perception of cultures from one of bounded communities with common

and systemic beliefs, customs, and practices to a more complex image of cultures, which are neither bounded, static, or internally homogeneous (see Worsley 1984; Wolf 1982).

Migration became a natural focus of study for anthropologists as the fields of economic, urban, and development anthropology found migration to be central to issues of social change, economic development, or social organization. The movement of people out of a community and in many cases, the concomitant return of wages, material goods, information, and sometimes the migrants themselves, had to be analysed for the impact this was having on the cultural make-up of that community (e.g. Wilson 1972). In a review of anthropological literature on migration, Michael Kearney (Kearney 1986: 332) identified three main theoretical trends through which this research has developed: modernization, dependence and articulation.

Modernization theory was the guiding principle behind early work on migration. Robert Redfield's model of the "folk-urban continuum" was one of the first and most illustrative of this theoretical framework. The basic tenets of this model held that migrants were individuals who were making rational choices that would eventually lead to the social and economic improvement of the individual's standing as well as that of their community. Underlying assumptions of this paradigm were that industrialization was a natural and desirable objective for the technologically primitive areas of the world. The inevitable adaptation and assimilation of rural or traditional societies with their more 'modern' counterparts was never questioned, only examined to facilitate an understanding of the processes. This perspective created a push and pull scenario between two places that used explicit notions of bipolarity. The urban vs. rural and traditional vs. modern dyads assumed linearity and a progression from a lifestyle

anchored in the past to one unencumbered by tradition and poised for the future (Rostow 1960). During this period the community and the individual remained the subject of study for the anthropologist, but it soon became clear that such a myopic view of migration overlooked larger economic and political circumstances. Without understanding the wider context of decisions the migrant was uncritically assessed as an actor of free will and rational choice. This image began to be challenged, particularly as the benefits of migration were not as consistent as first predicted (Kearney 1986: 333).

In order to address the more diverse consequences of migration on both the sending and receiving communities and to recognize the limitations and controls that incorporation in the world economic system presented, anthropologists began to work from within a dependence paradigm. This framework explicitly noted the economic relationships that existed between communities and the inequity of the relationships was highlighted. Individuals were characterized not as rational decision makers, but as victims of unjust economic forces. Geographical locations were discussed in terms of their relationship to one another economically and not as isolated self-contained units. Urban areas became centres, while the rural areas were peripheries. The centres of dependence theory, which also referred to the industrialized areas of the world in opposition to the unindustrialized areas, were seen as exploiters, capable of extracting resources and labour at low costs from the peripheries while at the same time creating markets for the more profit-oriented products of the centres (Frank 1967; Amin 1973; Wallerstein 1974). This analysis of migration, then, relied on a structuralist approach that placed the processes of migration in large and encompassing historical and economic systems. Anthropologists like Shoemaker (1976) and Kemper (1979) used this approach

in their examination of migration in Latin America, and although the placement of migration within historical circumstances was important, the focus on larger systems was not entirely compatible with anthropology's commitment to an understanding of social workings at the community level (Kearney 1986: 339).

More recently, there has been an emphasis in research to bridge the local with the global, so that the specific dimensions of migration would not be subsumed into broad political-economic generalizations (Kearney 1995). The most important advances of this new model, known as articulation, are its recognition that there is not a totalitarian and global economic system, that there is a degree of economic diversity, and that analysis should not consider only exchange systems, but the location of production surplus which in the case of migration, includes the household (Kearney 1986: 342). This type of research attempts to articulate the particularist features of different communities so that an assessment of migration does not adopt a universalistic explanation. Diversity of causes and consequences are highlighted, but without losing sight of the socio-economic circumstances under which these actions are manifested (see Meillassoux 1981; Nash 1981; Stuart and Kearney 1981).

This approach has been particularly advantageous for a gendered study of migration. As anthropologists attempt to identify and link the multitude of factors that form the context of a community's beliefs, customs and practices, and how these in turn are linked to individual behaviour, the role that gender plays became increasingly relevant. The position of women had already been noted in the literature (Boserup 1970; Cohen 1977; Lewis 1959), but within the framework of modernization or dependence theory, the results tended to simply account for the presence of women and not for the

source of their condition. Their experiences were treated as different, but how gender was related to those differences was not necessarily articulated (Pessar 1999: 579). Attention to how gender was affecting migration and the lives of women touched by this phenomenon began when researchers looked beyond empirical observations and analyzed the actual mechanisms that created diverse patterns.

In general, the common goal of gendered migration studies is to understand how gender affects the processes of migration and the individual's place in these processes. Pedraza (1991: 303) notes that literature on women and migration tends to examine a few basic questions: "How is gender related to the decision to migrate? What are the patterns of labor market incorporation of women immigrants?" and "What is the relationship of the public and the private?" Some research has focused on social change and the status of women as migration impacts on their roles within the family and the community (Tienda and Booth: 1991); other research starts by looking at how gender relations have limited or not limited women's access to labour markets and what types of occupation are considered appropriate (Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia 1990; Chant 1997). As gender theory has developed, however, it has become clearer that gender is always and everywhere intertwined with ethnicity and class. This is due to the recognition of gender as socially constructed, and therefore dependent upon the specific expression of gender associated with a woman's ethnic group and class. Without situating women in their social environment and understanding how their gender role is conceived, any analysis would be based on preconceived and probably ethnocentric assumptions (Pessar 1999: 577).

West Africa

Migration studies relating specifically to West Africa or Senegal, whether conducted from an anthropological perspective or not, can generally be classified according to the patterns outlined above. Most research falls somewhere along a continuum between very localized and specifically oriented studies of one community to large encompassing surveys of general census data. Oucho and Gould's (1993) examination of urbanization and migration patterns in sub-Saharan Africa is an example of the latter; it takes basic demographic data and attempts to identify some essential characteristics. Structural analyses of migration that seek historical and economic causes of the movement of people, particularly rural to urban or international migration, generally look at national or regional migration patterns (Amin 1974; Sow 1980; Ruthven and David 1995). As feminist theory began to influence the demographic research, feminine patterns of migration have been disaggregated and recognized for their distinctive qualities (Monimart 1989; Mackintosh 1989; Brockerhoff and Eu 1993).

The variation of migration behaviour in Senegal has been exposed largely through community-based studies that were able to provide more detailed and specific information on the social and economic context of the migrants (Diop 1965; Lericollais and Vernière 1975; Cormier 1985; Traore 1994). As each of these studies examined the response of families and individuals to economic and environmental issues, different patterns emerged. The variation that exists can be attributed to many factors both within and across communities, but some aspects of variation have clear correlations with cultural diversity. Cultural affiliation is related not only to who migrates, but it often

influences the destination, the length of stay, and the resources that are available to the migrant in the receiving community.

In relation to culture and ethnicity, gender has also been identified as a factor that shapes migration in Senegal. Authors using a gendered approach have considered a number of issues. Family structure, marriage, and fertility rates have been examined for changes caused by migration either from within an ethnic group (Brockeroff 1990; Enel, Pison and Lefebvre 1989) or in general demographic analyses (Antoine and Nanitelamio 1990; Gonzales 1994). Gadio and Rakowski (1995) were interested in whether migration could be characterized as a liberating or limiting reality for Serer women of Senegal. They focused their study on women's organizations in Dakar that were comprised of women from a common rural community. Observation of both the rural and urban areas allowed them to assess whether women's participation in these organizations actually constrained their mobility and ability to provide for themselves, or whether they were able to use their association to gain greater freedom. A similar study on women's status (Ebin 1993) looked at the international migration of women to the United States, and although all Senegalese women are considered, ethnic variations were also pointed out. Finally, many studies simply seek to illustrate the individual experiences of female migrants and the particular causes and consequences of their migration, emphasizing rich anecdotal information rather than broad generalizations (Perreault 1996; Thiam, Simard and DeKoninck 1999).

The theoretical perspective informing this thesis is easily situated within an articulation framework. The crossroads of ethnicity, gender, class, and migration that occur in the occupation of a domestic worker allow me to consider how these factors

inter-relate. The purpose of the research is to underline how culturally specific expressions of gender restrict or multiply the avenues that are open to women and shape the possible outcomes of their lives. Migration is differentially experienced by people depending on myriad features, these features can be brought out by detailed and qualitative examples of this diversity. Although the interviews upon which this research is based cannot be considered statistically representative, the lives that they relate are illustrative of the distinguishing dynamics present in other research. In Senegal, sex, age, education, marital status, ethnicity, and socio-economic status are only a few of the factors that combine to influence a person's experience in relation to the migratory process. Drawing out the significance of these factors is complex, and at no time should the individual be lost and people's lives portrayed as entirely predetermined. Migration is not only a process by which women can contribute to the maintenance of their community, it is also a means by which their lives can be transformed. Their day-to-day existence, relationships to their community and household, individual status, and autonomy are all affected by the decision to go to the city.

Domestic Work

Most female labour migrants in Senegal find employment as domestic workers (Sy 1991: 30). Domestic work is often a source of employment for women who are seeking wage labour in markets far from home. There has been an increasing interest in the study of the social category of domestic workers within the disciplines of social science. Such research has focused mainly on transnational migration of domestic workers between such areas as Latin America and the U.S. (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila

1997) or between the Philippines and Hong Kong (French and Lamm 1988; Ozeki 1995), but there has also been an interest in the inter-regional migration of women from rural to urban areas of Latin America and southern Africa (Cock 1989; Hansen 1990; Le Roux 1995; Rubbo and Taussig 1983; Vincent 1998). Although there are undoubtedly some common features amongst the various settings of domestic work, particular historical, cultural and economic backgrounds have to be considered so that local patterns and configurations can emerge.

Filipinas who migrate to foreign countries in search of domestic work will have a different combination of motivations than their South African counterparts who find the same employment within their own country. The impact of the decision to migrate on these women and their families is also dramatically diverse. Therefore, the experience of women in West Africa needs to be explored for its own unique circumstances. Until now, research on domestic work in this region has focused on the role of young girls. For example, in Ghana, young girls have been described as moving to city centres to work as 'helpers' of extended kin or in return for payment to the girls' families (Sanjek 1990). For young girls in Mali, the attraction of domestic work in the city of Bamako is often a means to escape unwanted marriages required by their families, or a temporary source of income that can be used to build a dowry (Coulibaly et al. 1994).

In Senegal, a very comprehensive study of domestic workers was undertaken by the non-governmental organization ENDA (Diaw et al. 1996). The purpose of the study was to reveal the specific nature of domestic work in Senegal in order to evaluate what problems or priorities of the workers needed to be addressed at a national level or by the organization itself. The study, which concentrated on the predicament of young girls,

was carried out under the direction of the child welfare sector of ENDA and with the support of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the *Bureau Intérnationale du Travail* (BIT), who shared as their objective the eradication of the worst forms of child labour. Despite its focus on young girls, the study did not exclude older women and a great deal of general information regarding the demographic make-up, working and living conditions, and motivations for migration was described.

Overwhelmingly, the majority of studies done on domestic work has concentrated on the relationship between the employee and the employer and the exploitative nature of this occupation (Cock 1989; Le Roux 1995; Romero 1994; Rubbo and Taussig 1983). In these studies, domestic service is characterized as reproducing unequal social relationships based on class, race, or ethnicity and the women are portrayed as victims with few alternatives because of their lack of social capital. Some studies examine the politico-historical forces that have framed women's entry into domestic work (Glenn 1986; Aymer 1997) and one study looks at how working women balance their professional and domestic obligations with the help of domestic workers (Okeke 1995). Still others focus on transnationalism and the experience of women moving between countries (Barber 1997; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997).

A focus on transnationalism attempts to comprehend the varied and complex experiences of people and peoples that can no longer be defined by the geographical space in which they live. Traditionally, anthropology has conceived of culture as being spatially and temporally bound. Cultural groups could be located on a map and cultural reproduction conceptualized as occurring within the communities of that physical place. Recognition of the weaknesses that this perspective embodied (particularly as migration,

travel and inter-cultural contact became increasingly common) has caused anthropologists to search for new ways of defining the plane or space in which culture is created (Appadurai 1996; Clifford 1992; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Hannerz 1996; Kearney 1996).

Although transnationalism in a strict sense does not apply to most women migrating in Senegal, many of the issues that are raised in transnational contexts are familiar to inter-regional migrants. Gupta and Ferguson's (1992) call for a deterritorialized account of cultural identity recognizes the need for a more fluid understanding of culture even within borders. Migration is more than just movement between places, it is a social action that relies on organization and that is based on particular values; it cannot be situated in a location, it spans locales and is maintained or transformed through relationships, symbols, and performances. A recent ethnography of a rural community in Senegal attempted to employ these insights by looking at community organizations and structures that transcend space through the migration of its members (Lambert 1994). As migration has become such a fundamental part of rural communities in Senegal, new approaches to ethnography are necessary in order to fully expound the dynamics of this system and its incorporation into the social, economic, and political structure of communities.

By looking at the experiences of women as they are narrated by them and relating these back to broader issues, this thesis attempts to give a gendered perspective of migration that accounts for cultural variation. Case studies of women reveal how they have become mediators between the urban and rural centres. The distinction between city and village is rendered ambiguous as social networks, resources, and information link the two spaces

and create new configurations that cannot be completely defined as urban or rural, traditional or modern. Roles, identity, and social networks are constructed and realized under circumstances that do not conform to more traditional anthropological categories. A woman's place in the city and the character of this place for her is ultimately connected to her village of origin. Although there are distinctions between urban and rural life, the two places cannot be considered as isolated and self-contained units. The migrants may be collectively defined by their existence in urban space, but their existence in that space has characteristics that originate in the rural community.

Chapter Two

Historical and Socio-Economic Background

Senegal is located on the west coast of Africa, lying below Mauritania, to the west of Mali, north of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, and encircling the Gambia (see figure 1). It spans 196,700 square kilometres and has an estimated population of over nine million people (Senegal 1998: 7). Most of Senegal falls into the geographic region known as the Sahel. A region that spans the African continent from east to west, characterized by low annual rainfall, it is a medial zone between the desert landscape of the Sahara and the tropical forest to the south. As a former colony of France, French is the official language; however, Wolof is the popular language spoken not only by the Wolof people, but also as the lingua franca in urban centres, and at times between different language groups of rural areas (Heath 1999:1690).

Like much of Africa, migration has a long history in the social geography of the landscape. Mobility has allowed people to take advantage of more fertile lands, or in the case of nomadic pastoralists, to move between areas in search of water and pasture. The migration patterns of recent decades, however, have a distinctive nature that threatens the stability and possibility of positive development in Senegal. Rapid urbanization has become the predominant form of migration, accounting for more than half of the country's migration. Forty-one percent of the population resides in urban centres with thirty percent living in the capital city of Dakar and its suburbs (Senegal 1998: 9-17). Since 1950, Dakar has seen its population multiply by five, from 350,000 to its current 2,160,000 people (Oucho and Gould 1993: 280-1). What makes this growth particularly significant is the inability of the infrastructure and labour market to keep pace.

Shantytowns are growing within and around Dakar, unemployment or under-employment is rampant, public services are strained or unavailable, and crime is an ongoing concern (Fall 1998: 135-7; Gellar 1995: 109; Sow 1981: 204-43). In fact, the attraction of people to the cities is not a response to the demand of a growing labour market, or favourable circumstances, but due to the relative opportunity that exists there compared to the increasingly meagre options in rural life. As Abdou Salam Fall (1998: 137), a local researcher of migration, states, "...the city is not an alternative development framework but rather a place of survival for individuals and for the households they form there or maintain in the village".

The cause of this rural exodus cannot be easily summarized or attributed to a single factor. Multiple variables have combined and contributed to the conditions that make migration, whether temporary or permanent, a seemingly or relatively attractive proposition. Individuals may understand their decision to migrate as arising from a need to earn cash income so that they can maintain the lifestyle of those left in the village; however, it is necessary to identify the deep-seated structural causes that underpin the surface level of these motivations and shape subsequent action. The rural people of Senegal are not automatons whose lives are determined by larger political and social events, but neither are they immune or somehow disconnected from these events. In order to fully appreciate the motivations and perceptions of migrants their lives must be located within a wider context.

The rural economy of present day Senegal has been shaped by pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial socio-economic features, the realities of the natural environment, and the exigencies of international markets and policy. Drought and

desertification have lowered yields of both food and cash crops and a growing population and the concentration of agricultural development in a small area have caused soil depletion and food shortages. Institutionalized dependence on France and foreign aid and a reliance on a few key industries have created a vulnerable economy. Most Senegalese are at a disadvantage because of the disparity between earning potential and the cost of imported food and consumer goods which have become essentials. These and other factors have combined to make continued survival of rural village life contingent upon the migration of at least a portion of the population.

Senegal's difficulties lie to a large degree in the country's lack of economic diversification. A legacy of the colonial period, the peanut accounted for up to two-thirds of the country's export income at the time of independence. Since then, the ratio has dropped and in the 1990s the peanut makes up only about twenty percent of total exports. Unfortunately, however, positive growth and investment in other industries, particularly fishing and tourism, have only partially compensated for the diminished contribution of the peanut crop to the national economy. In 1992-1993 the total yield of peanuts was 623,359 metric tons, a drop from its 1960-1961 yield of 922,500 tons and less than half of its peak productive period in 1975-1976 when 1,434,100 tons of peanuts were produced (Gellar 1995:60). This decline in productivity is symptomatic of the low economic returns for the producer that have motivated many peasants to switch to the cultivation of food crops as their confidence in the ability of cash crops to provide even a minimal level of security has waned. The switch to subsistence agriculture has positive implications for the local community, but for the nation-state, it has been unable to decrease the dependence on food imports or improve self-sufficiency. Relatively little

technology has been introduced to improve yields and only fifty-percent of the country's food needs are currently being met by domestic production compared to seventy-percent in the early sixties (Gellar 1995:61).

The Peanut Economy

The cultivation of peanuts as a cash crop began in the 1840's when the peanut commanded significant profits and the local population was interested in purchasing cloth, guns, and foodstuffs with their incomes. At this time, the transformation to cash cropping was voluntary and many peasants chose to convert at least some of their food crops into peanut cultivation (Colvin 1981:63). Initially this cultivation took place in the plains between Dakar and Saint Louis and around the Sine-Saloum Rivers, an area that runs parallel to the northern coast of Senegal. The benefits that could be gained through this trade did not go unnoticed by the French, particularly after the abolition of the slave trade when the colonists were seeking a new source of revenue. To this end, the French government began to make efforts to pacify and directly control the interior of the countryside. Since the mid seventeenth century, the French had controlled Gorée Island and Saint Louis where they built forts and trading posts. By the nineteenth century they had settled in Dakar and Rufisque, both located on the coast. From these areas, the French competed with the British, situated further to the south, for the control of trade to and from the region. To consolidate their control of the area, increase their potential profits, and keep the British from gaining territory, the French began a campaign of expansion into the interior regions (Gellar 1995: 5-6; Osae et al. 1973: 236-8).

The Senegal River in the north was a region, not unlike the regions around the Gambian and Casamance rivers to the south, around which the pre-colonial economy had centred. Between 1855 and 1890 the French fought to gain control of the area, but although they were able to defeat the local kingdoms each time, they were unable to maintain control as the population would simply desert the area until the French had removed themselves and then return. Eventually, the destruction of crops and granaries as well as the disruption of daily life brought the region to destitution and many moved permanently to the peanut basin, the region of agricultural peanut production that began in the area between Saint Louis and Dakar and expanded south and east. Attempts to impose the resettlement of the region, particularly the resource rich delta, had only limited success and to the present day the Senegal River has remained an under-developed region with high out-migration (Barry 1981:52-3).

To consolidate the already burgeoning peanut trade and to reduce the cost of transportation, the Dakar-Saint Louis railway was built. Peanut prices had begun to drop and some farmers were reverting to millet and sorghum cultivation. The railway would reduce costs, thereby returning some profit to the producer and convincing the population to continue peanut production. Until the construction of the railway, the producers had dealt with buyers mostly through African intermediaries, but once the railway was complete in 1886, French and Lebanese settled along the line. This move ultimately eliminated the African middleman and effectively extended the French monopoly on peanut marketing. Up to three-quarters of the peanut trade went through three French trade houses that had the advantage of powerful connections with credit and insurance

companies who invested in the region, and had control of the distribution of imported goods (Gellar 1976: 50-53).

Through the development of the peanut basin the local population was being absorbed into the market economy. Many, however, chose to continue subsistence agriculture, a decision that did not advance French economic interests. In order to encourage expansion of the peanut basin and the transition to cash cropping, the colonial government imposed a head tax on the Senegalese that would force the population into some type of cash oriented economic activity (Colvin 1981: 63-64). This promoted not only permanent settlement in the peanut basin, but also a system of temporary rural migration called *nawetan,* an adaptation of a pre-existing institution, that incorporated foreign farmers into a community by giving land to the migrant in exchange for labour. This arrangement might only last the rainy season, or it might extend over a number of years and thus lead to permanent migration. The peanut basin also absorbed seasonal migrants, mainly from the Casamance region, who worked as wage labourers from November to March harvesting and threshing peanuts. Finally, the *noorani*, or dry season migration, also took shape at this time. Most agriculture in Senegal relies on rainfall and is therefore dependent on the seasons. With the system of head tax in place and the desire to acquire certain imported goods, many people began to use this period to travel to other areas, learning a trade or engaging in wage labour. Migration to the urban areas did not become common until after World War I, but from that point on it became the most common form of *noorani* (Faye 1981:140).

The success of peanuts continued to attract migrants to the region and new settlements were constantly being developed (see figure 2). The expansion of the peanut

basin was again facilitated by the construction of the Dakar-Bamako railway that brought peanut cultivation southward and eastward. The railroad was pivotal for production. Prior to World War I ninety-three percent of peanuts were grown in the basin, and the region has continued to dominate the trade (Gellar 1976: 50). Another important element of successful expansion was the advent of Mouride settlements. The Mourides are an Islamic Sufi brotherhood who were founded and remain inspired by the life of Amadou Bamba. Amadou Bamba preached hard work, religious meditation, and devotion to Islam as the path to paradise. From the beginning of the peanut trade, the Mourides had taken a keen interest in the development of the peanut as a cash crop and created large estates. At the end of the French conquest, many Wolof looked to the Mourides for political and economic leadership. As agricultural estates were established, men of any background could convert and prove adherence to their new faith by labouring on the estates known as *daras* in return for spiritual guidance and after a number of years gain the right to marry and settle permanently on a plot of land. Profits from agricultural production of the *daras* go to the *marabout*, a local religious leader, for a period of about ten years, at which time the pioneers are given land to cultivate for themselves. From then on they are only required to pay a small annual tribute to the *marabout* who continues to control access to land, although mainly in technical terms only (O'Brien 1975: 57-85).

Many of the initial converts came from the class of slaves who had been emancipated by the French following the defeat of the Wolof kingdoms. Both domestic slaves and *ceddo*, the warrior class, benefited from the opportunity to access land through the Mourides, particularly as they were not evaluated or apportioned land on unequal

terms in relation to their former masters or others of the freeborn class. The productivity of the *daras* gained the respect of the colonial government who would award large tracts of land to the brotherhood in previously undeveloped areas. The Mouride pioneers became prime vehicles for expansion into the new frontier, continually raising the net production of peanuts and the profits for both the colonial system and the new and increasingly powerful Mouride leaders (O'Brien 1975: 57-85).

The peanut basin is significant for Senegal, not only economically, but also socially. Approximately fifty percent of the population lives in the area and in 1972 it accounted for seventy-one percent of all cultivated land (Faye 1981: 139). The region continues to be a destination for seasonal migration either from marginal regions of Senegal or from countries such as Guinea, Burkina Faso, or Mali. At independence, the wealth accumulated from peanut production had placed Senegal in a better economic standing than most other French colonies, though this was not enough to ensure the future viability of the country. Development in Senegal had become too dependent on only one source of income and on the French market. Despite many advances, the legacy of the colonial government was a very unstable economy and a geography that could be divided into three regions of unequal, yet inter-dependent, development. The subsistence agriculture sector dominates most regions outside the peanut basin and off the coast, including most of the Casamance and the upper Senegal River valley. These areas have few cash earning possibilities and are the source of migrant workers to urban centres, international destinations, and cash crop regions. Second is the peanut basin that is the main component of the cash crop sector. Much of this region is dependent on seasonal in-migration, but the local population also provides a large portion of the dry season or

more permanent forms of migration to the cities. The cities, the recipients of a large number of migrants, make up the final zone, the modern sector, where most of the administrative, industrial, and service sectors are found (Gellar 1976: 50-51).

Government Policy

Since independence in 1960, although Senegal has maintained political stability, it has suffered from the intensification of economic dependence and under-development. The population of Senegal has tripled in size since 1960 due to improved medical and sanitation conditions that have lowered infant mortality and increased life expectancy. The fertility rate has dropped, from 7.1 children in 1978 to 5.7 in 1997; however, this has not been enough to adequately slow the population growth rate, which has been averaging about 2.7 percent annually (Senegal 1998: 7). As a result, the population densities of the urban and coastal areas as well as the peanut basin have become critical, particularly as there has not been concomitant development of the industrial or agricultural sectors needed to support and feed the rising number of people.

Efforts in the sixties to restructure the commercial agricultural sector made no effort to reduce economic dependence on one cash crop; however, they were intended to stabilize the rural economy. The Office National de Coopération et d'Assistance au Développement (ONCAD) was established, which was based on a system of rural co-operatives that would work directly with ONCAD to sell peanuts, buy seed and fertilizer, and acquire credit. Through this apparatus the government attempted to provide a buffer between the world market and the peanut growers. Prices for peanuts were fixed so that the years when world market prices were high, the profits could be held by the

government to subsidize the years when the price plummeted. Instead, however, the profits were used to finance the large bureaucracy of the government agencies associated with ONCAD and peanut prices remained fixed at a very low price. In addition, payment to the co-operatives was made in the form of credit chits that could be cashed in once the peanuts had been subsequently sold. This usually involved a delay of three to four months, a period which was difficult to bear for some farmers. Speculators took advantage of the farmers' need for cash and would buy chits at a greatly reduced price (O'Brien 1975: 132-135). Consequently, many farmers accumulated debt during this period that became almost impossible to alleviate and the discontent came to a crisis point during the time of drought from 1968-73.

The period of drought brought a general decline in crop production and rural communities were forced to rely on a greater amount of imported food. At the same time, prices for peanuts were being held well below world market prices, which had undergone a dramatic increase. The drought was not the ultimate cause of rural exodus, rather it brought to a head an already critical situation. Many households chose to increase the number of migrants to the city and/or switch to millet cultivation to reduce the need for imported foods. This became a political statement as the government's reliance on the cash crop's income was threatened. The crisis, known as the *malaise paysan* had two outcomes: the first was an increase in the product price for the farmer, and second the government's realization that economic diversification could no longer be postponed (Mackintosh 1989; O'Brien 1979).

Large-scale projects meant to transform the Senegalese economy were established at this time. These projects relied to a great degree on foreign aid and investment. In the

rural areas, the implementation of technologies to increase the yields of peanuts and millet in the peanut basin and rice in the Casamance were put into place. Areas that were previously under-developed became the targets of new ventures, notably cotton in the east and rice in the Senegal River valley. Phosphate production, commercialized fishing, and tourism were expanded and have become rivals with the peanut as the nation's leading industries. The endeavours have managed to offset the country's reliance on a single industry, but there has been a substantial price. Senegal's foreign debt increased from 103 million in the early 1970s to a peak of over four billion in 1987. This dependence put the country in a difficult position when in the 1980s donor agencies and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) compelled the government to reduce its spending and privatize most of its public holdings (Gellar 1995: 64-71).

Although money poured into the country, many projects were never implemented, were unsuccessful, or had lower profits than anticipated. Agricultural productivity was still relatively low and suffered from periodic drought. Strategies to entice foreign investment into manufacturing and import replacement production had attracted little interest, most natural resources remained unexploited, and corruption funnelled money away from public expenditure and into private hands. To appease the IMF and donor agencies, the Senegalese government agreed to implement a structural adjustment program in return for continued financial assistance. The program, which began in the 1970s, involved the reduction of government bureaucracy and salary expenditures, the privatization of key enterprises, the promotion of exports, and the general removal or minimizing of government intervention in the agricultural and business sectors. The initiatives were supposed to reduce the country's debt and budgetary deficit, and thereby

create a positive environment for economic growth. Many of these goals were achieved; the deficit went from 8.8 percent to 2.5 percent of the gross domestic production (GDP) and inflation dropped from 9 percent to 2.5 percent, but economic growth was painfully slow (Gellar 1995: 72-73).

A lack of commitment in the carrying out of structural adjustment programs (Berg 1990) as well as the programs themselves have been alternately blamed for the stagnant economy (Diouf 1992: 62-85). On the one hand, it is argued that the measures taken towards economic liberalization were not stringent enough. According to this view, positive indicators reflected in the reduction of the deficit and controlled inflation were in fact due to improved agricultural production after years of drought and a reduced cost of imports (Gellar 1995: 77). On the other hand, programs such as the *Nouvelle Politique Agricole* (NPA) and the *Nouvelle Politique Industrielle* (NPI) that were intended to remove government involvement, have been criticized for the precarious position in which they left the producers in agriculture and industry. For the agricultural sector, the removal of fertilizer subsidies has been the most detrimental measure. Without the subsidies and the ability to acquire credit from the state, the use of fertilizer has dropped and consequently so have the annual yields of peanuts and millet. As for the industrial sector, the reduction of customs on imports caused a decrease in the overall workforce with companies either closing or down-scaling (Gellar 1995: 73).

Wherever the blame may lie, the consequences are the same. The Senegalese population must constantly adapt themselves to changing conditions in order to survive. Most recently this has meant adjusting to a fifty-percent devaluation of the country's currency. This measure was imposed by the IMF and the World Bank, along with further

cuts to government spending including a fifty percent salary roll-back for the president, twenty-five percent for ministers, and fifteen percent for all other government employees (Gellar 1995: 78-79). The devaluation should improve the quality of rural life, but this remains to be seen, and in the interim people from the villages continue to pour into the cities in search of an income that can sustain those who remain.

Community Expectation

Unequal development of the country's regions and resources, inefficient economic policies, dependence on foreign markets, population increases, and harsh environmental conditions have all played a part in the deterioration of rural life. As the ability to earn an adequate income in the villages decreases and little is done to create new opportunities, the city becomes a destination of necessity and desire. Apart from the financial attractions, the city also offers modern services and infrastructure. Hospitals and schools are more numerous and better equipped compared to rural communities. For some villagers only primary education or basic medical attention is available in the general vicinity. City dwellers have easier access to water and electricity, an assortment of foods and consumer goods, throngs of people, public transportation, and a wide variety of amusements. The city promises animation, a certain amount of comfort, and very importantly, the possibility of earning what is necessary to pay for such conveniences. Regardless of whether these things are achieved, the promise is there.

Migration has, under these circumstances, become a viable option and even a requirement of rural life. As each village struggles to survive, the migration of at least some of its members is commonplace. The departure of a portion of the population eases

pressure on the community to sustain itself. With fewer mouths to feed, food crops come closer to meeting needs and fewer imports are necessary. In cases where land is becoming scarce, competition for access is diffused, and in all cases the remittances received from absent villagers can be used to improve the living conditions of the receiving families and the village as a whole. Money and goods sent to family members provides them with clothing, shoes, school supplies, kitchen wares, and furniture as well as the much needed food supplements, particularly rice and oil, and condiments that are highly valued for the flavour they add to local cooking. Money from migrants is redistributed to the village either directly through the migrants' participation in a village-based association or indirectly through their family. Numerous such associations exist and perform a variety of services from rotating credit groups, to the financing of projects, and religious or community celebrations. Ironically, because not all regions of Senegal suffer from land scarcity, a shortage of labour has also been a consequence of migration. In Casamance, the influx of salt into many low-land rice plots has been linked to the lack of persons available to labour against this occurrence (Linares 1970: 225). Overall, migration to the cities has decreased national food production potential, reinforcing the need for imports, and at the village level, a dependence on migrant remittances (Colvin 1981: 5).

Therefore, although there are general economic, political, social, and environmental conditions that can be identified as contributors towards a positive climate for migration, patterns of migration across communities differ according to a number of factors. Regionally, particular environmental and economic situations can influence the number of people who migrate and their motivations for doing so. In an environmentally

impoverished region a migrant may feel that finding a job in the city is the only possibility for survival while someone from a region that has suffered less from drought and more from a lack of economic improvement might choose to migrate because work in the city is viewed as less arduous and more financially worthwhile. Many different patterns emerge once one takes a closer look. Across Senegal migration has been incorporated into village life in particular ways that cannot be described by a single model. To identify and understand some particularistic features of migration, micro-level studies of a segment of the population are valuable; certain variables can be isolated in order to examine their specific relevance. When looking at female migration, ethnicity becomes an important source of information, as a group's gender construction of women's roles will have a direct bearing on whether or not a woman migrates and in what manner.

Chapter Three

Ethnicity

Identifying ethnic groups in Senegal, as anywhere, is not a straightforward issue. The origins of an ethnic group are rarely clear-cut and historically the mobility of peoples, intermarriage, conquest, and cultural transmission make the boundaries between groups blurred and confused. There are no essential categories into which people can be classified unequivocally. In cases of mixed parentage, people might identify themselves as belonging to one ethnicity under one set of circumstances and as belonging to another under different circumstances. Ethnicity is a flexible and partially self-defined category.

In Senegal, ethnicity remains a relevant marker of identification for the country's population. People usually consider themselves to belong to the ethnic group of their father; however, their mother's origin remains important and is often cited alongside that of their father's. Ethnicity is an essential aspect of self-identification, along with profession, marital status, and birthplace, but the significance that can be attributed to ethnicity is variable. For example, politically, ethnicity has only had a marginal role. The Senegalese constitution prohibits the formation of political parties based on ethnicity. The *Parti Socialiste,* which has been in power from Independence until last year's election, has attempted to keep ethnic affiliation from controlling caucus membership in local politics (Gellar 1995: 119). Clan politics have been particularly instrumental in cutting across ethnic lines. The patron-client relations upon which clan politics are based do not depend on ethnicity; the relationships may be built on religious affiliation, business interactions, or regional interests that incorporate a number of ethnic groups into

their memberships (O'Brien 1975: 152-160). Patrons may be important members of a rural community, religious leaders, successful businessmen, or prominent politicians; what they have in common is the ability to convince a portion of the population that in return for political allegiance they will be capable of proffering material gain or political influence on behalf of their clients (Gellar 1995: 37). As a result, the presidents and major political leaders of Senegal have not only been chosen from a number of ethnic groups (Diouf 1994: 42), many, including the current president, Abdoulaye Wade, come from mixed parentage (TV5 2001).

On the other hand, it is possible to isolate and analyze ethnicity as a determinant and organizing principle of migration patterns. Ethnicity is not the only factor that influences migration, nor is the character of migration entirely homogeneous within ethnic boundaries as other features converge and combine creating slight variances in the circumstances and responses of independent communities. Nonetheless, while recognizing that some inconsistencies do exist, migration as an institutionalized pattern of behaviour can be legitimately identified as a feature of social organization that depends on culturally specific practices. Particular aspects of a migration model have specific historical origins or economic causes that are independent of a community's social structure, but it is how these incidents work themselves into a reasonably consistent pattern in the social fabric of the community that makes them significant. For example, when a young man from the Upper Senegal River valley migrates to France in search of employment, he is not only following the historical precedent of his agnatic kin, but fulfilling his obligation as a male member of a patrilineage that requires at least a few of its members to obtain overseas employment to improve or maintain the material

circumstances of the family, reduce the pressure on local resources, and raise the prestige of both the individual and his family. Migration in this context is not simply an individual decision, it is a socially conceived opportunity for community survival and as such, it is embedded with collective meaning (Evans 1999; Guilmoto 1998; Kearney 1986).

Ethnic Groups in Senegal

According to the *Atlas of Senegal,* (Becker and Martin 1975) there are nineteen distinct indigenous groups in Senegal. For the purpose of censes, a number of these classifications are collapsed into five major designations: Wolof, Serer, Haal Pulaar, Diola, and Mande. These groups constitute ninety percent of the population, with the remaining ten percent is comprised of other minority ethnicities and those of foreign heritage. Language is the basis upon which people are classified as belonging to a particular group, although patronyms and region of origin are also considered. Inter-marriage and the mobility of people have made the latter classifications less significant, however certain regions are still considered to be ethnically dominated by one group and the recent reconfiguration of administrative territories has more clearly demarcated this characteristic (Diouf 1994). In figure 3, the region of Ziguinchor is considered to be Diola; Kolda is mainly inhabited by sub-groups of Mande and Haal Pulaar; Fatick is Serer; Louga is Wolof (Diouf 1994: 41); and Saint Louis is dominated by a Mande sub-group in the Upper Senegal River valley, and a Haal Pulaar sub-group in the Middle valley (Traore 1994: 64). Along the coast, especially in the Dakar and Thies regions and the Lower Senegal valley of Saint Louis, the populations are heterogeneous due to the

migration of people drawn to the cities or the more developed coastlines (also see figure 4).

Wolof is the largest ethnic group in Senegal, making up forty-four percent of the population (Senegal 1988 as cited in Diouf 1994). The administrative classification of Wolof subsumes the Lebu who inhabited Cap Vert of the Dakar region and were traditionally fishermen. From their original homelands in the pre-colonial states of Walo, Cayor, Baol, Jolof and Saloum (see figure 5), the Wolof have moved west to the coast, and south and east into the old peanut basin and the new frontier (Diop 1981: 22). Wolof social structure recognizes double unilineal descent. The matrilineage, known as the *xeet* in its maximal form and *meen* in its narrowest form, is important for the inheritance of social status. It is to uterine kin that Wolof will turn in times of need and with whom they form the strongest bonds; however, individuals are said to belong to their patrilineages. It is with their agnatic kin that the Wolof share their patronym, totem, and taboos.

Social stratification is particularly hierarchical. It is based on a system of social categories that separates the free-born from slaves and recognizes several professional castes. The category of free-born persons includes royalty, nobles and peasants. Opposite the free-born are the slaves, also a heterogeneous category that is comprised of domestic slaves attached to the households of royalty or nobility, slaves that make-up the royal guard and the army, and slaves of the peasants. Each class of slave has corresponding privileges and obligations that create distinct divisions between them. The caste system is a hereditary and endogamous organization that designates specialization in a particular profession. Blacksmiths and *griots*, the oral historians and praise singers

attached to a household, are the most common professional castes (Diop 1985). Islamization of the Wolof occurred from the mid to the end of the nineteenth century, particularly during resistance to the French. Prominent leaders converted, and after the Wolof defeat, the Mouride brotherhood was founded (Gellar 1995: 6-7). Islamization as well as colonization have contributed to the breakdown of the traditional hierarchical system and to the augmentation of patriarchy and patrilineage. Slavery is no longer extant; however, many Wolof are still aware of their caste or social rank and social meaning is sometimes attributed to these categories, especially in the case of marriage (Diop 1985).

As the largest ethnic group in Senegal, and as a population that is highly urbanized and intensely engaged in the peanut trade, the Wolof have become synonymous with the national identity, the face that Senegal presents to the world. Urban culture is said to be Wolof culture and the Wolof language is rapidly becoming the country's lingua franca, replacing French. A process of Wolofization is said to be occurring, particularly in the cities and amongst certain ethnic groups such as the Lebu, Mande, and Serer (Gellar 1995: 116). The urban and therefore prestigious identity of the Wolof, coupled with the receptiveness of the group to the integration of others, has made assimilation attractive and relatively conflict free (Gellar 1995).

The next largest group in Senegal, making up twenty-three percent of the population, is the Haal Pulaar. Haal Pulaar is a linguistic designation; the name itself means 'those who speak Pulaar'. Three groups belong to the Haal Pulaar: the Tukulor, Fulbe, (otherwise known as Peul or Fulani) and the Laobe (Diouf 1994). The Fulbe are traditionally pastoral nomads whose population can be found throughout West Africa as

far east as Lake Chad (Salamone 1994: 100). In Senegal, the highest concentrations of Fulbe are located in the Upper Senegal and Upper Casamance River valleys, where many have taken up sedentary lifestyles. The Laobe are a small group about whom little is known except for their reputation as wood sculptors. Finally, the Tukulor, who mainly inhabit the Middle Senegal River valley, are considered by some to be a mix of Fulbe and Serer or Lebu peoples (Diouf 1994). Like the Wolof, the Tukolor constitute a highly stratified society, but unlike the Wolof they recognize strictly patrilineal descent and are very patriarchical. As the first black population in the area to become Muslim (as early as the eleventh century), they display a sense of pride in their heritage and are fervent practitioners of Islam. Although slavery has been abolished, history has not produced the same breakdown of the caste system amongst the Tukulor as amongst the Wolof (Diop 1965). Furthermore, the Tukulor have expressed concern over the process of Wolofization they feel threatens Tukolor migrants in the urban areas and what they perceive to be an unusual amount of political sway held by the Mouride leaders who are dominated by the Wolof (Gellar 1995: 118).

The Serer account for fifteen percent of the population. They inhabit the region formerly known as Sine, and parts of Saloum and Baol, now including the region of Fatick and portions of Diourbel, Kaolack, and Thies. The Serer have been conceived of as a kind of transitional group between the hierarchical peoples of the north and the more egalitarian peoples of the south, including the Diola and other indigenous minorities. This is because there are visible distinctions within the Serer between those who have adopted more Wolof characteristics, including a hierarchical system and conversion to Islam, and those who have remained animist and non-hierarchical (Diouf 1994: 53).

Apart from this differentiation, the Serer collectively recognize both lines of descent. The patrilineage is typically where a child is situated and where social status, family name, and a traditional education will be passed on. The maternal line is the child's source of community; although the child may not be physically present there is an emotional bond that exists not only in the abstract, but in real economic and social relationships. The oldest brother of the child's mother is considered the clan chief and it is to this person that children will give their earnings towards their dowry or their savings until they are married. In times of financial or social crisis, it is to the maternal community and particularly the maternal uncle that a child will turn for help, even to the extent of relocating and receiving traditional education from the chief (Pélissier 1966: 210-211).

The last two of the five major groups, the Diola and the Mande, are comparable in size with slightly higher and slightly lower than five percent of the population respectively (Diouf 1994). The Diola live in the Lower Casamance or Ziguinchor region. Once again, the Diola cannot be considered a wholly uniform cultural group. Islam and a Mande people (Manding), who inhabit the region east of the Diola, have had an influence on the traditional social make-up of the Diola in certain regions. The Diola living to the south of the Casamance River have either retained their animist religion or converted to Christianity and have had little direct contact with the Manding. North of the Casamance, the population is Muslim, and directly to the east, both Islamization and Mandingization have occurred (Linares 1984: 411). Notable in Diola communities is their lack of political centralization and social hierarchy. Cohesiveness is found in family units that are based on patrilineal descent; the minimal form includes all brothers of the

same father with their families and extending out to all members of the same clan. The mother's brother has an important relationship with her children, as they have rights over his property and he has rights over their labour (Lambert 1994). The Diola category somewhat clumsily encapsulates other minority groups of the Casamance including the Bainuk, Balant, Mandjack, and Mancagne. These populations consider themselves as distinct from the Diola, but their regional proximity and similar non-hierarchical social organization makes it simpler for administrative purposes to collapse them into one group. Only one respondent in this study, a Mandjack woman, falls into this category and for the purposes of this research she will be considered separately.

Mande refers to those populations speaking a Mande language. In Senegal, the Mande speaking peoples are often divided into two groups, the Soninke and the Mandinko or Manding, the latter subsuming the Malinke, the Bambara, and the Xasonke (Diouf 1994). The Soninke inhabit the Upper Senegal where they have been living for over a thousand years, at least since the time of the Ghana Empire (Davidson 1977: 34-36). The Manding represent a fourteenth century migration of Mande people from the Mali Empire to the Gambia River valley and the Middle Casamance. Both sub-groups are characterized by rigid hierarchies like those of the Wolof, centralized authority, and patriarchy (Quinn 1972). Patrilineal and matrilineal affiliation both have significance and women have a separate system of political organization with their own spiritual leader, though she is not an Islamic leader and her position is considered subordinate to that of male leaders (Schaffer and Cooper 1980).

Ethnicity and Migration

Ethnicity in Senegal, particularly for those in rural areas, provides not only a source of identity, but social structures through which one navigates one's life. In the case of migration, the social mechanisms that exist within a community and that have been adapted to incorporate a modern form of migration are prevalent not only in the community of origin, but in the destination community. An individual migrant then, is not simply leaving the village behind to become an anonymous figure in a new place with a different set of rules. This does occasionally happen, but more often than not the migrant maintains ties to the village for both material and emotional reasons. This is done not only by sending money or making the occasional journey home, but also by becoming a part of a social network of village-based relationships that extends to the city. Living within this social network provides support to the urban initiate. However, it also represents the physical presence of the village in the city and as such it reinforces the social organization, value systems, and norms upheld by that community. As much as the village is in the city, the city is also in the village. The existence of mechanisms that allow, maintain, and to some degree control migration within village life is evidence of the ongoing negotiation of social life in a non-localized setting (Antoine & Coulibaly 1989; Fall 1998).

With this in mind, it appears that the village of origin is the most important determinant of migration patterns and that circumstances may vary between villages. Nonetheless, communities are culturally constructed and thus, to the degree these constructions are shared by ethnic groups, ethnicity is a key condition. Despite variation, patterns based on ethnicity do emerge. When generalized patterns of migration in

Senegal are described, it is possible to say that the Soninke are more likely to migrate to France than are other rural populations (Gonzales 1994; Traore 1994); Diola migrants organize themselves into urban associations that are based on the segment of the village from which they come, known as the quarter (Lambert 1994: 92-95); and while the Fulbe are increasingly sedentary, they sometimes practise seasonal or temporary rural to rural migration (Soumah 1981: 161-182).

Looking at female migration and more exclusively at female labour migration, gender structure becomes salient. Men and women perform different roles in their society based on the cultural conception of appropriate behaviour, responsibilities, privilege, and hierarchy that are associated with being male or female (Rosaldo and Lamphere; 1974). A woman's responsibility to her family, access to resources or income, and status in her community are culturally distinct and contribute to a women's place in the migratory structure. In Senegal, gender constructions of women are not uniform across ethnic groups, and therefore ethnicity becomes a marker of difference for female migrants.

Haal Pulaar and Mande Migration

The most obvious cultural distinction in female migration is whether or not a woman will participate in migration as an independent labourer. In two out of five of the major ethnic groups described above, women do not generally migrate except as members of a household. While Haal Pulaar and Mande men commonly migrate in search of employment, women will usually join their husbands, move with their parents, or reside with kin while attending school (Sy 1991). In the Senegal River Valley, the

Tukulor and the Soninke have been the subjects of numerous studies on migration since the sixties (Diop 1965; Gonzales 1994; Guilmoto 1998; Lericollais and Vernière 1975; Traore 1994). A common theme in many of the studies is to compare the patterns of these two groups. Migration from this area has a long history. Economically motivated migration began around 1925 when head taxes were imposed and sporadic droughts affected the region. The quest for monetary income gave rise to the incorporation of seasonal and temporary migration to the more economically viable region of the peanut basin, the Gambia, urban centres, especially Dakar and Saint Louis, and after 1960 to France. In general, the Soninke are more affected by permanent out-migration and, as mentioned previously, they are more likely to migrate to European destinations, especially France. In a recent study, forty-nine percent of Soninke migrants compared to ten percent of Tukulor migrants chose France as their destination, while fifty-eight percent of Tukulor migrated within Senegal compared to only twenty-six percent of the Soninke. In contrast, however, more Tukulor will migrate at some point in their lives than the Soninke, so the particularities between the patterns of migration are not only in number, but also in nature (Traore 1994).

Neither group favours female labour migration; it is a rare occurrence, and in so far as gendered information is available there are few noticeable differences between the ways women experience migration in their respective communities. Only a quarter of the women whose husbands have migrated have themselves migrated, leaving a highly feminized population in the villages. In both cases, women with co-spouses are more likely to migrate than women who are part of a monogamous relationship, but what is distinct is that only thirty-one percent of Soninke women actually join their husbands

compared to fifty-five percent of Tukulor women. This is because wives of international emigrants, whether they are in Europe or Central Africa (West Africa being the exception) prefer to relocate to Dakar than to the actual residence of their husband. As the Soninke have a higher occurrence of international migration, more Soninke women will take up an intermediate residence (Gonzales 1994). Despite the physical separation marriage with a migrant might entail, this form of marriage is considered valuable by the potential wife and her family. It has been noted that amongst the Tukulor, young single women may travel to urban areas under the pretence of visiting relatives, but while in the city they attempt to secure a marriage arrangement with a migrant from their community, consequently negotiating their own relative status and position (Diop 1965; Sy 1991). Like the Tukulor and the Soninke, Fulbe and Mandinko women do not commonly migrate; however, there is little literature available that investigates the particularities of migration in these communities (Diaw et al. 1996: 11).

The insubstantial number of female labour migrants in these societies does not diminish the value of the roles these women assume in relation to the system of migration communally embraced. As mothers, they physically contribute the bodies that will become migrants and they educate their children with the values and abilities that uphold this institution. They may relocate their families to be with or nearer to their husbands and they assume responsibility for domestic and familial duties that allow for their husbands' departure. The absence of women as labour migrants is significant to this research because it is evidence of the culturally based organization of migration.

The reasons why female labour migration is negatively selected have not been well researched, but are generally attributed to the particularly conservative interpretation

of Islam[1] practised by the Haal Pulaar and Mande, and because of the traditionally patrilineal and patriarchal systems of organization (Guilmoto 1998; Sy 1991). As is discussed in more detail later, Diola, Serer, and Wolof women have traditionally had more access to economic resources over which they exercise control independent of their husbands and are in some cases responsible for certain household contributions (Diop 1985; Lambert 1994; Perrault 1996). Conversely, productive and reproductive activities of Haal Pulaar and Mande women fall under the control of their husbands or another male member of their husband's family. Even remittances from absent husbands will usually pass through the hands of the compound chief before reaching the migrants' wives (Gonzales 1994). The Haal Pulaar and Mande are considered to be culturally conservative groups where social status and gender continue to be important determinants of one's function and place in society (Sy 1991). More specifically, Guilmoto (1994) argues that the restriction of female migration is maintained so that, together with the high value of fertility and the prohibition of regionally exogamous marriages, the mobility of the male migrants is constrained and the continued flow of resources back to the village is ensured.

As significant as the absence of female labour migrants is in Haal Pulaar and Mande societies, the presence of female labour migrants, especially amongst the Serer and Diola, is equally significant in the other three ethnic groups of Senegal. The difference between the groups whose women migrate and those who do not is more than just a question of degree; the large number of women moving from the rural areas cannot

[1] Over ninety percent of the Senegalese population is Muslim and since the time Abdou Diouf became president there has been an effort to raise the profile of Senegal as an Islamic country while continuing to promote religious tolerance and diversity. Senegal is not an Islamic State and individuals and communities practise and relate to Islam differently.

be dismissed in an offhand manner. Their absence from the village and presence in the city dramatically change the composition of the rural community and requires the transformation or integration of social mechanisms through which women are able to migrate and by which this phenomenon is maintained. The most immediate feature of the rural to urban migration of young women in Senegal is the entrance of almost all the migrants into one professional category, namely domestic work.

Chapter Four

Domestic Work

The nature of domestic work as a profession varies around the world, but it does tend to a certain ordering according to the labour market and the labour pool that is available. In North America, the labour market for full-time domestic workers is limited due to the lack of a local labour supply and the enforcement of minimum wages that price a domestic worker out of the range of most potential employers. In addition to economics, there is also a stigma attached to domestic work both for the employer and the employee as the relationship is often characterized as exploitative. Domestic work, in this light, is considered a demeaning job for the worker and an extravagance for the household. This kind of popular opinion has kept the market for domestic workers in the higher echelons of North American society where such luxuries are more commonplace and the arrangement would face less criticism. As for the source of the labour, in most cases, domestic workers are foreign born women; many have migrated only after their place of employment was established. In the United States there has been a long tradition of domestic workers being hired from the more marginal populations, particularly the African-American community, but also migrant populations such as the Japanese or Latina women who are the more common employees today (Glenn 1986; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). In Canada, the favoured supply of domestic workers comes from the Philippines. Aside from speaking English, Philippine women are preferred because of their reputation as respectful and nurturing caretakers (Barber 1997).

The Philippines have become a source of domestic workers for many areas of the world. Along with Canada, there is a steady stream of migrants to Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, and the Middle East. The search for higher wages and an improved standard of living have made international migration a common occurrence for many young women in the Philippines. Work in Asia and the Middle East is usually on a contract basis, whereas in the United States and Canada employment as a domestic worker can open up more permanent settlement possibilities (Barber 1997). Within less developed countries, the organization of domestic work is quite different. In households above a certain economic level, hiring a domestic worker is customary. Most upper middle class to high-class homes would not be without at least one employee. Generally, the population from which workers are drawn is of the lowest economic order; frequently they are migrants from rural areas whose lack of suitable skills for the urban environment and need for cash make them ideal candidates for low wage employment (Hansen 1990; Rubbo and Taussig 1983; Vincent 1998).

Sub-Saharan Africa has not been an exception to this general pattern, but many regional particularities exist. Domestic work in South Africa had, and to some extent continues to have, a very racialized ordering of the profession. The relationship between the employer and the employee was embedded with deeper political and ideological notions that distinguished the two not only in terms of their individual professional and social position, but also in terms of their absolute social category identified by race (Cock 1980; Momsen 1999: 179-80; Le Roux 1995). During the colonial era this could also be said of other African regions; however, beginning before independence, and certainly since that time, the employment of domestic workers is commonplace amongst Africans

and numerically more significant (Hansen 1990: 361; see also Coulibaly et al. 1994; Diaw et al. 1996). In many of the African colonies male domestic workers were more common than female; this trend has gradually changed, except in the case of Zambia where men still outnumber women in this profession (Hansen 1998: 361).

Domestic Work in Senegal

Domestic work in West Africa and Senegal grew out of two historical precedents: the use of domestic workers by colonialists, and the traditional practice of fostering children. The idea of fostering a child in West Africa has many forms; the specific form that is relevant to domestic work is that of a child who is given to a family (usually kin) and is expected to perform certain household duties in return for living expenses, training in cooking, child care, and cleaning, and possibly education. Sanjek (1990) argues that this type of relationship developed out of the abolition of slavery, the need for domestic help in the face of urbanization, and the unequal economic circumstances of a burgeoning population. The ability for a family to diffuse the costs of a child's upbringing while still maintaining rights over that child can be considered an adaptive means of maintaining a family's economic security by redistributing wealth within a kinship system. Situated in a social context that views children as belonging not only to their parents, but also to the lineage as a whole, the placement of a child in the home of relatives would be reconcilable with the predominant ideology regarding childcare and family (Vandermeersch 2000).

In Senegal child fostering continues, but it does not reflect the principal arrangement of domestic work, nor is it the type of domestic work that informs this

research. Most of the young women pouring into Dakar from the villages are not going to work for relatives; they are finding jobs with strangers and will usually have had a series of employers in a very short period of time. Domestic work in Senegal, like other regions of Africa, has developed its own peculiarities. A study of domestic work in Dakar carried out by a number of researchers at ENDA (Diaw et al. 1996) goes far in presenting general characteristics of the Senegalese situation. Of the survey sample represented in their study, approximately ninety-six percent of the respondents belonged to the Serer, Diola, or Wolof ethnic groups. Specifically, the Serer make up the largest portion forming sixty-three percent of the total survey population, compared to fourteen percent Wolof and nineteen percent Diola. The Diola population can be subdivided between the Diola who make up fourteen percent and the Mandjack, Mancagne, and other indigenous populations of the Casamance, who form the remaining five percent (Diaw et al. 1996: 9). Only six percent of the survey population originated in Dakar; all others had at some point in their lives migrated from predominantly rural areas, illustrating the interrelatedness of domestic work and female labour migration in Senegal (1996: 10).

According to the study, most domestic workers are not married; i.e., they have never been married, or they are divorced or widowed. This is not unusual considering that most domestic workers are under the age of eighteen (1996: 10). In Dakar, this profession typically attracts the single and very young (1996: 18). Many migrants return to their village once they are married, but even for those who remain in the city, the conditions of domestic work make it an undesirable occupation. Employees are sometimes expected to live-in with their employer; if they do not, they will generally

have long hours coupled with transportation time that will leave them with few hours for their family. Most employers will not allow their domestic worker to bring her children to work, so child-care must be available and at a cost that does not make the mother's employment futile (a challenging task when the average salary rarely exceeds fifty or sixty dollars Canadian a month). Good jobs are not easy to find. French and Lebanese employers are reputed to paying the highest salaries (1996: 33), but the elite of the Senegalese should probably be included in this category. In Dakar, the use of domestic workers has trickled down into the lower classes. A family living in a modest apartment, possibly without electricity, may still have the use of a domestic worker. The scenario will usually be that of a very young girl charged with the care of a baby or toddler and other small tasks, freeing up the woman of the house to perform other duties including some that allow her to earn an income.

General observations in the study suggest that the ability for some low-income households to afford a domestic worker is a direct result of the high demand for employment. On any given day in Dakar, a prospective employee can drive to one of a few locations in Dakar where women line the streets or collect in a large open area waiting for the opportunity to work. What is notable in these areas is that there are few young girls. Most appear to be older than fifteen or sixteen, which according to one woman is because younger women find jobs more easily. Generally young women are preferred, not only because they are considered trainable and less of a threat to the madame (the name generally applied to employers in West Africa) who fears her husband will stray, but also because young girls can be paid less. They are more willing to accept lower salaries because they have fewer financial responsibilities and because it is simply

considered appropriate to pay a younger, less experienced worker a smaller salary. The absence of girls aged under fifteen in the maid market is also a result of the fact that most girls will find employment through acquaintances and older siblings or cousins who are looking out for them. This method is preferred because it ensures a better placement and the employee is less vulnerable to false accusations or abuse. With young girls making as little as six or seven dollars a month it becomes advantageous for even the most meagre household to employ a domestic if that will allow the woman to earn an income outside the home. On the other hand, a slightly more privileged home can enjoy a decreased workload with little financial burden.

Domestic labourers in Dakar do not constitute a small work force. A study in 1993 by the Organisation Intérnationale du Travail (OIT) estimated that approximately 88,000 women were employed in this field and that number has surely grown as female labour migration is on the rise (Mbodj 1998: 18). ENDA's study (Diaw et al. 1996: 16) also revealed that most domestic workers have had little or no education. Fifty-nine percent of the women surveyed had never been to school and another thirty percent had only attained some level of primary education.

Most women in the study said that when they ventured to the city they accompanied or joined a number of girls of about the same age from their village. Together they share a small room, usually with few amenities, splitting the costs of the accommodation and dividing the chores. Often there is an older woman from the village who assumes responsibility for the girls or they will look after themselves with limited supervision from their landlord or neighbourhood chief. This person may have no affiliation with the girls; he may simply rent a room to them, or as is often the case in a

shantytown, he will have been appointed as the representative of the community. As an elder male, this person will take on the traditional role of a guardian, but the degree to which this person will intervene varies according to the individual and the community. Despite little direct supervision, most women have constant contact with other members of their village. They belong to informal or formal associations of people from their village, attend organized social gatherings of villagers, and will be visited by or casually meet other villagers regularly. Most women send remittances home and visit the village on occasion. The types of migration women practice vary, but in most cases women migrate for at least a few years before they return permanently to the village or they will stay in the city and their migration will become indefinite. In some cases, particularly amongst the Diola, women will only migrate seasonally, returning every year for the harvest, but this trend has diminished over the years (Diaw et al. 1996).

PART TWO

Chapter Five

Domestic Workers in Dakar

My research in Dakar consists mainly of the results of twenty-six semi-structured interviews with migrant domestic workers that were conducted over a period of four months. The data gathered in this research is especially useful in tying together and illustrating the results of other research that looks at domestic work and female labour migration in Senegal. Information in this part of the thesis will rely on my data, and when otherwise referenced, on other related research. Studies on female labour migration have concentrated on the migration of young Diola women (Cormier 1985; Diop 1989; Enel et al. 1988) and older married Serer women who follow a different pattern than their younger counterparts (Mbodj 1998; Perrault 1996; Thiam et al. 1999). Although not specifically about feminine migration, Lambert's (1994) dissertation on Diola migration is also a rich source of information. He provides a detailed analysis of both male and female migration and he maintains a theoretical perspective of migration as a social system that transcends distant places. There is an absence of research that focuses on the migration of young Serer or Wolof women; however, the aforementioned study of domestic workers in Dakar (Diaw et al. 1996) treats ethnicity as a variable and therefore distinctions according to Wolof, Serer, or Diola identity are drawn out and can be used to inform this research. In addition, an article on women's reasons for migration based on ethnic affiliation provides useful insights into cultural variation (Sy 1991). The results of my interviews tend to confirm the general trends that are described in the latter research and serve as case studies. At the same time, the information gathered can be analysed for

new meaning in the search for an understanding of migration as a social and culturally defined institution. This research is not statistically representative, but it is representative of the complexities and contradictions that exist at a lower level of analysis and it is rich in anecdotes and images.

Although I was unable to spend prolonged periods with the women interviewed, during my stay in Dakar I was able to observe the relations of employers and employees in the homes of family and acquaintances. Through volunteer work at ENDA I was in contact with girls who worked as domestic workers in the day and attended school in the evenings. My association with ENDA was particularly valuable as members of the *Equipe Jeunesse Action* have been working with young domestic workers in various projects to upgrade the education and improve the living standards of domestics since the time of their initial study. I was able to benefit from their vast knowledge and from the access they gave me to the neighborhoods where many domestics live. These neighbourhoods are known as *quartiers flottants* or floating neighborhoods because of their temporary or tentative nature. These are the shantytowns of Dakar that grow up in just about any open area. At first the structures are made from very mobile and makeshift materials, but over time permanent structures are added and the community begins to organize itself in a more systematic manner. The danger of life in these areas is the reality that at any moment the owner of the land or the city may expel the residents without compensation. The presence of these communities is illegal, but they are tolerated and attempts are being made to acquire the land from the owners for the people, so they can plan for their future in security. Many shantytowns have become well organized and with the help of NGOs like ENDA they have been able to realize

improvements such as community gardens, electricity, more accessible water, local schools that provide formal and informal training, and other community-based services.

Although I was able to obtain the participation of a good cross-section of women for the interviews, the value of the data gained is not so much in its quantitative aspect, but in its qualitative aspect. Such a small sampling of women cannot be considered representative and a few circumstances of the interviews make this point particularly true. For example, as was noted earlier, the majority of domestic workers are under the age of eighteen years, yet all but two of the interviewees involved in my research were over eighteen. This selection was partly a result of the tendency for older women to search for employment in the streets, where I sought participants, and a result of the general preference for more mature employees that was common amongst my acquaintances who tended to be of slightly higher economic class than the average employer of the very young. However, it was also an intentional choice. Through my work with ENDA I did have access to younger girls, but I chose to focus on older informants as I felt they could be more reflective about their experiences and motivations, making for a richer source of data. The consequence of this choice is that my data only represents the quarter of those employed as domestics over eighteen, and as such contains certain propensities reflective of their age group. This could affect the outcome of the research. On the other hand, most of the women interviewed had come to Dakar at a young age and were able to discuss their original situation; the average age when they arrived was seventeen. Except for those cases where women chose to migrate after having children, the stories are very similar. However, based on ENDA's study of domestic workers (Diaw et al 1996), the

number of women in this study who are or have been married and have children is unusually high.

The women who participated in the interviews were found through a few different approaches. Most of the women (16 of 26) were contacted as they were collecting in the prescribed areas for domestic workers seeking employment. Two locations were visited. The first was a street in central Dakar, the Rue Assane Ndoye, where women gather on the sidewalks along the sides of buildings, sitting in small informal groups. Women can be found for about two or three blocks along the street and there are a few scattered clusters going down the sidestreets. My research assistant, Ramilatou, and I went to this location on two different occasions. Approaching one of the groups, we would explain our research and ask for volunteers who would be interested in participating. As we conversed with the women it soon became clear that they tended to cluster according to their ethnicity. Amongst the Serer and the Wolof there was a degree of intermingling, but the Diola were quite markedly set apart. We managed to attract a few Serer participants, but each time we attempted to solicit the participation of Diola women, we were refused unless we promised to pay a sum of money. I was told on one of these days that it is not that common for Diola women to seek employment in this way, that most will find employment through acquaintances, and that they will not accept low-paying jobs. This, coupled with the fact that I was unable to gain access to Diola domestics through my acquaintances, made the quality of information specifically about Diola women less than ideal. I did manage to secure four interviews with Diola women and one with a Mandjack person at another location, but as will be discussed later the informants are somewhat less representative than would be preferred.

The other maid market we visited was located on the outskirts of Dakar in a residential neighborhood known as Liberté VI. Women here gather in a large open space surrounded on three sides by roads and backing onto houses. There are several large shade trees and it is under their protection from the sun that people gather in separate groups using this area for a number of activities. On one side of the square men chop and carve up large logs of wood into mortars, drum bases, and smaller items such as wooden spoons. Along with the sound of traffic, there is the constant rhythm of metal hitting wood and occasionally the recognizable battering of a drum as it is being tested by a potential buyer or a bored woodworker. The objects they make can be purchased on site, but usually they are carted away to various markets or sold directly to merchants.

Opposite the men is an area that is unprotected by trees and unsuitable for physical activity; this space has become a small parking lot where cars are watched for a small fee. Between the two, backing onto the homes in the centre of the open area, are a few benches covered by the shade of one large tree. This spot is reserved for the casual passer-by, usually groups of men stopping to have a late afternoon conversation with others who are taking relief in the shade, or children on their way home from school lingering to listen to the adults, play games, or simply watch the movement of this busy area. This is also the place where we conducted our interviews, sitting on small benches set slightly apart from the permanent ones. The women themselves were gathered under a few trees at the front of the square facing the traffic. They sat on long wooden benches, small individual benches, mats or pieces of cardboard. In the heat of the afternoon, many would sleep, but usually they quietly chat amongst themselves or tell stories that set the listeners off into raucous laughter. Women can be found here from early morning until

early evening. The numbers vary from a few dozen to well over a hundred as the women come and go. Unlike the workers at Rue Assane Ndoye, these women are more formally organized. If someone arrives looking for a domestic worker, they will be met by the local chief. The chief is an older man who takes on the responsibility of negotiating with the potential employer and finding a suitable employee. In return for his services, the employer will pay a small fee (about two dollars) once an arrangement has been made and after a month of employment, the woman hired will pay an equivalent amount. At this location, rather than finding women grouped together according to their ethnic affiliation, the chief organizes their seating arrangement mainly according to age. In this manner, he is able to quickly produce a selection of women in accordance with the employer's criteria, which is more often related to a woman's age and appearance – regarding health, hygiene, and if at all possible, integrity- than to her ethnicity.

Our arrival at the site was first assumed to be that of potential madames, so we were immediately greeted by the chief who began to question our requirements. When we explained our research and our need to interview migrant women he was equally cooperative. We settled into our own area and prepared ourselves while he set about sending women over to us one by one. This arrangement proved beneficial in so far as we were able to specify women of a particular ethnic group and with the large number of women present our requests could usually be met. The disadvantage was that some of the informants appeared less enthusiastic about participating. Our previous experience in interviews had been that once past the initial nervousness, most respondents became comfortable and spoke very openly and easily. Although we made it clear to each woman that she was not obliged to take part in the interviews, only one woman declined,

a few others continued though they remained strained throughout the interview. This reserve was probably due to the fact that they were told by the chief to speak to us and because the site itself did not provide a relaxed atmosphere. We placed ourselves away from other groups of people, but children and some curious onlookers still approached and would listen to our conversations. Fortunately, not all women responded negatively and though some interviews are skeletal, the interest of some informants made the overall experience positive.

The remaining participants were contacted through acquaintances. The relationships vary; some were former or current employees of my acquaintances or they were their tenants, and some were affiliated with ENDA. These interviews proved to be the most detailed and informative. Since we shared a mutual acquaintance, the women seemed more at ease and the interviews took place in a more relaxed setting, often the women's own homes. In the end, the collection of interviews that resulted from this research consists of data from a wide assortment of women with a diversity of experiences. The vast majority of participants were Serer, but we did manage to speak to women from each of the five main ethnic categories, and oddly enough, the number of women representing each group corresponds relatively accurately to the ethnic makeup demonstrated in the study by ENDA (1996:9). The women's ages range from fourteen to about thirty-four, with the average age being twenty-five. Most are Muslim, a few have converted from Catholicism to Islam, and the rest are Catholics. The number of Catholics in the sample is over-representative of the actual composition of Senegal's population. Less than five percent of the population is Christian, over ninety-percent are Muslim, and the remainder follow traditional animist religions (Gellar 1995: 114).

However, the higher number of Catholics is probably explained by the predominance of Serer and Diola who are the two ethnic groups with Christian membership and the absence of the Haal Pulaar and Mande who are essentially Muslim. Ten of the respondents have children, three are married, two are widows, and five are divorced.

Most female migrants find work as domestics when they come to the city (Diola: Hamer 1981: 195; Lambert 1994). It is an occupation that demands few specialized skills and less education, an advantage for many rural migrants whose level of education is low. The level of education for two respondents in this study is unknown, eight had no education, ten had less than three years, and five completed primary education. Only one woman continued past primary school, completing another three years. This is considerably low compared to urban women, of whom sixty-nine percent complete primary education (Senegal 1993: 37).

The Nature of Domestic Work

Domestic work has a tendency to dominate most hours of a person's day; consequently understanding the nature of this work in Senegal is an important step in understanding the fabric of a migrant woman's life. An average day begins around six in the morning, earlier if the woman has far to travel and if she is expected to arrive at her place of employment by seven, which is common for families with children who want help sending them off to school. Duties during the day will include general cleaning, child-care, and laundry. Some are expected to cook, or at least help in the preparation of meals and the clean up after. Depending on the household, the workload varies. A wealthy household may have more than one domestic, each with her own specific

responsibilities; this eases the pressure put on one person. Other households may not be able to afford more than one domestic, but the daily chores continue to be assumed by other women of the house so that all work does not become the responsibility of the domestic. In this case the number of people available to help and the character of the employer play an important role in determining the conditions of the workplace. Access to modern conveniences, especially washing machines, on-site plumbing, and electric stoves, will also have a dramatic influence on the kind of work expected and the physical demands of that work.

At the completion of the work day, usually somewhere between four and seven in the evening, the women return home. It is not uncommon for the journey home to take at least an hour, even if the distance is short. Traffic within Dakar comes to a standstill at rush hour and domestic workers, like most Dakarois, have to rely on a heavily burdened public transportation system. Travel to the suburbs of Dakar, although farther away, can often take the same amount of time as the traverse accross Dakar because of the bottlenecks that occur in the city. Most women have eaten at their place of employment, so they do not have to prepare a meal when they return, but any other chores, laundry and washing up are done at this time. Some women attend classes in the evening to learn how to read and write or sew, extending their day even further; this pattern is then repeated six days a week. Saturday evenings and Sunday, the most common day off, are usually set aside for socializing, relaxing, and for those who are Catholic, church.

In some cases, women are employed as live-in domestics. However, this arrangement is generally unpopular amongst women even though they may benefit from lower living expenses. The reason they do not prefer to live-in is due to the long hours

and lack of free time that is typical of this position. Except in the most wealthy of households, the employees are rarely given their own living space, so even when they are not required to be present or performing a task they are not able to remove themselves. Their constant presence along with the expectations of the employer generally mean that the employee will be available from early in the morning to late at night. Their duties may be spread out throughout the day and therefore take on a lighter appearance than that of a domestic worker who keeps hours, but the inability to have personal time in a separate space makes the arrangement very unattractive. The presence of another domestic will ease the solitude and provide some social network within the home; otherwise any meaningful social interaction will probably only take place on the one day a week the employee has off.

The Structure of Employer-Employee Relations

The nature of domestic work sets it apart from other forms of labour. As many researchers have noted (e.g. Cock 1980; Rubbo and Taussig 1983) there is a particular quality in the relationship and setting of domestic work that is more noticeably inequitable. The position is characterized as such for a number of reasons. The most obvious is simply the kind of work that is being done. Domestic work has generally been branded as menial, especially when it is not being done for members of the person's family. Fetching a drink, picking up an employer's dirty clothes, or cleaning up dishes are jobs that are considered servile. These are the day-to-day tasks that are a requirement of living, but their accomplishment rarely elicits the self-satisfaction or admiration that

most people seek. The ability of one person to hire another to do this work consequently creates a kind of social separation between these two people.

This social separation is maintained and reinforced through behaviour that serves as a constant reminder of the dissimilarity between the employee and employer. Arno (1985), a legal anthropologist, refers to this as structural communication, "Social actors read, in their interactions with one another, a statement of their relative structural positions. If they act like patron and client, or like competitors--as determined by reference to behaviour normally associated with relationship categories recognized within the group--their actions convey to one another and to the observer/analyst that they have such a relationship" (1985: 42). Although the domestic worker is living in the very personal and intimate space of her employer's family, she is not given the same consideration as a family member. She will not be allowed to eat with the family or eat certain luxury foods, but often what foods are considered acceptable will not be clearly articulated. This leaves her vulnerable to attacks and will cause many women to eat in hiding for fear of being reprimanded. In Senegal, a domestic who is caught sitting on a sofa, washing her own clothes in the washing machine, or catching a glimpse of what is on the television can expect a sharp reproof. When she is not in the midst of cleaning, a domestic is usually expected to sit in the kitchen or, at the very least, she should be sitting in a corner that is set off from the activities of the other members of the family. If a child demands her company watching television, she will sit on the floor while the child takes the sofa. However, even this arrangement is reserved for times when the parents are absent as both the child and the domestic know that it would meet with disapproval. Orders are taken not only from the adults of the house, but also from the children. This is

a particularly difficult situation as the children are also placed in the care of the domestic and their misbehaviour will often become her responsibility. This is the case even though the parents rarely give her the kind of authority over the children that she needs in order to control them. Inevitably, she is forced into a kind of tightrope act, balancing between the children's blackmail and the parents' threats of dismissal.

Living in the home of her employers, and privy to very intimate information, a domestic is given access to physical and social space that is usually reserved for kin. She is witness to arguments, she may know the details of a family feud, she will probably even know the bathroom habits or peculiar fetishes of her employer. However, instead of privileging her position vis-à-vis the family, this access to intimacy is actually a marker of her inferiority. She is allowed access precisely because she is subordinate; her knowledge of the private affairs of the family is inconsequential. They neither seek her esteem, nor fear her reprisal.

Of course, these relationships are complex, vary according to the individuals involved, and embrace a certain amount of contradiction. Although domestic workers will not be accepted as bona fide family members, they are in some ways allotted a kind of quasi-familial status if their relationship with the employer is a good one. This association brings with it both positive and negative attributes. A woman can benefit from opportunities that are afforded her, but she will also be subject to paternalistic attitudes and she will be expected to act with deference if the relationship is to be maintained. One interviewee provided a good example of how these relations can develop and endure over many years.

Fatou came to Dakar about eleven years ago. She is married (though not legally), but has not lived with her husband since before she came to Dakar. She has three children who remained in the village with her grandmother until she died, at which time she was able to place the children in something like a boarding school. Fatou had found a job as a domestic, but one day came upon an acquaintance from her village who told her of a job opening with a Lebanese family. Fatou accepted the position and worked for the family for a period of one year, in which time she developed the reputation of a good and honest employee. Relatives of her employer were in search of a domestic that would mainly be responsible for the care of their son. Since Fatou's employer already had more than one domestic she offered to let them take Fatou. The arrangement was made and for five or six years she worked for her new employers. Fatou considered her position and her relationship with her employers to be positive. She shared the general housekeeping with another employee and looked after the children. Fatou was particularly close to the young boy as she was solely responsible for him in his first years. During the day she would carry him on her back while working around the house; she fed him, changed him, bathed him, and when he cried in the night she would be the one to soothe him. Although Fatou could not be considered an equal member of the family, the respect she received as a valuable employee and her job satisfaction and devotion to the son did create a mutual loyalty and sense of responsibility that went beyond a simple employee-employer relationship. This became particularly evident in the years that proceeded.

After several years of employment, Fatou's employers ran into financial difficulty. They were forced to move into a relative's house and because of lack of space they could no longer keep Fatou as a live-in. On a few occasions her employers were not

able to pay her salary, but they helped her in any way they were able. At the same time, Fatou was being solicited by a potential employer who was offering her more than double the salary she had been receiving. Not wanting to jump into an unknown situation from one that had proven to be beneficial and feeling a sense of loyalty, Fatou hesitated. Her devotion to the family and her reluctance to leave was also wrapped up in her bond with the son. "He reminds me of many things, I did not want to leave him for a second, for - every day, every night I am with him." At first, Fatou refused the position, but with three children of her own to support she made an arrangement with her new employer to work only days. Since her employers had moved into their relative's place she had only been working evenings so she was able to work the two jobs without informing them of her new position. For some time she went between the two jobs, but the exertion this required began to take its toll and she decided to tell her employer despite her fear that they she might become angry. Uncertain of her own financial future, Fatou's employer encouraged her to take on the new position as she could not guarantee continued employment and had kept her on until that point mainly out of loyalty.

Fatou left the employment she had held for years and moved to her new location, but her relationship with her former employee did not stop there. Fatou continues to visit them on occasion, relying on them for advice and, at times, financial assistance. When her husband asked her to come to France, where he is now living, she came to her former employers to ask their opinion of whether she should go and what she would need if she should decide to leave. The family has given her old pieces of furniture and small sums of money to help pay for her son's schooling or to get her through a difficult month. She will ask for this money either directly as a loan, or she will simply detail her financial

problems in the hope that she will receive a gift. Although these transactions may be referred to as loans there is little expectation of the money being returned. This is in contrast to an arrangement Fatou has with her current boss who loans her larger sums of money with which she travels to Gambia to buy cloth and resell it for a profit. In this case, she is expected to make payments towards the loan; however, the willingness of her employer to front her a relatively large sum of money is itself an example of behaviour that exists outside of formal economic interactions.

Fatou's case may appear to be somewhat exceptional, and although it is by no means the norm in Senegal, it is also not unusual. Another example of quasi-familial relations between an employer and employee is that of a domestic worker who worked for an elderly lady in the last years of her life. The elderly lady and her family held a deep regard for the domestic because of the genuine affection and great care she displayed for this woman. Upon her employer's death she was not only offered employment by the woman's son, but has become the recipient of numerous gifts from other family members. As is apparent, such quasi-familial relations can be extremely beneficial for the employee. It may even seem as though they are one sided in favour of the employee. Domestics do indeed benefit from these associations; however, they are much more complex and it must not be forgotten that they are always the product of an unequal relationship. The domestic is still an employee and more importantly, a person of lower social rank. Furthermore, if she wants to benefit from such a relationship, she will generally be required to make explicit demonstrations of her social inferiority. This is how she repays what appear to be unequal exchanges. She is in a sense trading in social status for economic advancement.

In Senegal, the hierarchical nature of the society reinforces the practice and acceptance of such social divisions and it also provides the mechanism by which these relationships can be produced. As was discussed earlier, Senegalese society is pervaded by client-patron relationships (O'Brien 1975). Speaking about these relationships in any absolute sense as though people follow a set of rules is impossible, but there are definite generalities that exist. In the setting of domestic work the pattern is usually one which exemplifies Mauss's idea of 'the gift' (1954). He describes *prestations* (translated as being "any thing or series of things given freely or obligatorily as a gift or in exchange; and includes services, entertainments, etc., as well as material things") as commonly being taken in the form "of the gift generously offered; but the accompanying behaviour is formal pretence and social deception, while the transaction itself is based on obligation and economic self-interest" (1954:1). Although Mauss may be speaking more strictly about economic returns, the gifts being given by employers to their employees do not come without an expectation of reciprocity.

Over and above the meagre salary a domestic is paid (grossly illustrated at times when the bill of a dinner out is equivalent to a month's pay or the grocery bill for two weeks exceeds it by almost double), she may receive money to visit the doctor, to pay for a prescription, to buy materials for her children's schooling, or to pay for a family member's funeral. These gifts are not part of the employment contract, but they are somewhat expected. The fact that they exist outside of the employment agreement makes them instrumental in creating a sense of obligation in the recipient. Ingratiated by the generosity of the employer, an employee will feel indebted and although she may not be able to repay her employer in material terms, she can repay in kind. The employer will

expect increased loyalty and a stronger work ethic and, if the domestic appears to be disregarding her duties or acting out of place, she may be verbally reminded of all the kindnesses she has received and made to feel ungrateful. She will also be expected to indulge favours such as working late at a minute's notice or changing her regular day off without complaint. In effect, she is placed in a position of economic dependence as a result of her low salary and in turn is manipulated by this dependence through gifts or money in times of need.

In Fatou's case a continued association with her former employers is very beneficial. Although she is no longer employed by them and therefore cannot be as easily influenced by their generosity, she is still able to ask for and receive financial help from them with no expectation of return. Once again, however, this exchange is not as unbalanced as it first appears. It would be wrong to assume that there is no selfless-ness or kindness involved in this form of gift giving, but placed in the context of Senegalese society it has layers of meaning that have to be explained. In return for what she receives, Fatou will be available to her former employers should they ever require small favours or services from her. More importantly, she will heighten their sense of status, as her demeanour when she is around them will always be that of a lower ranked person. Even though she is no longer employed by them she will still serve them a glass of water if they ask, tidy up a stack of books, and she would never let them carry bags or heavy objects if they were out. When she visits their home she will remain in the kitchen unless asked into the more private areas and she will never accept nor is ever offered to eat or drink anything except for a glass of water (notably tap water rather than bottled). Fatou will not attempt to alter this relationship; in fact she encourages it, as it is exactly this

ranked positioning that allows her to ask for money or gifts without embarrassment or guilt. She is acting completely within the confines of Senegalese social organization. Alternatively, her employers benefit from this positioning not through some self-involved form of satisfaction, but in regards to society as a whole. In Senegal, a person's status, power, and prosperity are measured as much in personal wealth as in the cohort of people one can support financially or call upon to render services.

Of course, there are probably as many distinct organizations of domestic work as there are households that employ domestic workers. The degree of exploitation, level of hierarchy, nature of the employer-employee relationships, and general work conditions combine into unique sets of circumstances. In addition, as more women choose to live away from their employer the significance of the employer's dominance is somewhat mitigated. This does not mean that the actual relationship between the employer and the employee changes, but the women are able to escape the social oppression of their employment for several hours of the day. This time, often shared with women of a similar situation or with family, serves not only to validate the reasons for accepting such employment, but as a space where common complaints are aired and the experiences are given meaning. A kind of solidarity is created in which a woman can confirm the value of her work and diminish the importance or relevance of her employers. A more concrete consequence of this solidarity is the ability of women to network about jobs and provide material support should a woman decide to leave her place of employment, making it possible for women to change their situations and become less dependent on one employer.

When asked to discuss domestic work and working conditions, the most common grievances are about the feelings of distrust that are directed towards them. They complain that they are often suspected or accused of stealing property or money. When they are left alone in the house certain articles, cupboards, or rooms may be locked up for safekeeping and if anything should ever be misplaced or broken, the blame will be immediately placed on the domestic. Although sometimes this ambiance of suspicion simply creates an uncomfortable situation for the employee, on other occasions it is used as a tactic to cheat the domestic worker out of money. Many women say they have fallen victim to employers who will accuse them of breaking or stealing an item in order to terminate their employment and withhold any salary that is still owed them. One woman commented that she would no longer seek employment by going door to door, a fairly common practice for domestic workers, as it made her vulnerable to this kind of duplicity. She said too often the woman of the house would simply take advantage of the situation by accepting the solicitation for work, but once a number of chores had been completed or a few days of service put in, the woman would invent some pretence, usually of theft, in order to fire her without compensation.

As well as the theft of property, theft of a husband is also a going concern of employers. These concerns are not completely unfounded; there are of course real cases where domestic workers have been caught stealing money or attempting to seduce the husband of their madame. Senegal is after all a polygamous society and it would not be completely inappropriate for the man to take another wife or for the woman to attempt to improve her own situation. Although there is no way of saying absolutely, it is probably not unreasonable to assume that most employees are not intent on becoming the new

'madame' or in robbing the household blind, but the actions of some become the nemesis of others; a domestic worker may find herself without a job if her behaviour is misread or if the husband is found making advances, regardless of whether they were solicited or not.

Chapter Six

Motivations

Women are motivated to migrate to the city for financial reasons. Although there are non-financial reasons intertwined with financial ones, all of the women said their primary motivation is to find work and earn money. As the participants described their desire to come to Dakar, the incentives they specified could be broken down into seven general themes. The women stated that their motivations were (1) to help their families (2) to support their children (3) to buy clothing and other items (4) to emulate their friends who have gone to the city (5) to escape difficult rural conditions, specifically few cash earning opportunities, hard physical labour, and general poverty (6) to discover the urban area and what it has to offer, and (7) to be independent. These designations are derived from the words of the women; however, the motivations are inter-related and cannot always be easily disentangled from one another. When first asked why they came to Dakar, most women would answer simply, to find work. When prompted to explain further their answers reflected what exactly these jobs, or more precisely the money they could earn, represented. The answers reflect how their decision to move is conceptualized by the women; what meaning is infused into migration; and when examined as a whole, what terms are considered socially acceptable in describing the migration experience. However, this type of questioning as well as the categorization of the answers is inherently ambiguous. If pressed further the women may have given more reasons for their departure or they may emphasize one motivation over another because it is considered more appropriate. This does not detract from the value of their answers, but

it should be kept in mind that the data shown (figure 6) are only reflective of the reasons women migrate and not absolute quantifiable determinants.

Figure 6

	Reason for Migration						
Ethnicity	To Help the family	For the children	To buy things	Independ-ence	Bad rural conditions	To see friends	Disco-very
Wolof	3	1	1				
Serer	11	2	7	1	7	6	1
Diola	3	2			1	1	1
Bambara		1			1		
Tukuolor	1						
Mandjack	1				1		1

The motivations that are communicated regarding why a woman chooses to come to the city are significant at face value, linking many of the structural causes of migration to individual decision-making and revealing personal desires. They are also significant, however, when they are examined for deeper meaning. A close look at each category illustrates how migration has become symbolically, materially, and organizationally integrated not only into the women's lives, but also into their communities' structure.

Helping Family

Helping family was the most common reason cited by women for coming to the city. Eighteen out of twenty-six women said they wished to help their families; however, this number does not include those women who said they needed to find work only to support their children and not other members of their family. If these women are included the number rises to twenty-two. Although children would usually be regarded

as family, the reason for this apparently artificial distinction is that in these cases the motivation behind the migration is a result of divorce or the death of a husband. The circumstances surrounding their migration are different and deserve special attention. In each case, the women were living in the village when they had their children and in all but one case they have brought their children with them to Dakar. The expense of raising a child in the city would usually preclude the mother from helping other family members. This is confirmed by the fact that the respondent who left her children in the village, though she did not cite helping family as a reason to migrate, does in actuality send money to her mother. Notably, all of the women whose children have remained in the village send money home. The remittances are primarily to support their children, but they also contribute to the household as a whole. Moreover, although only eighteen women stated that helping their family was an impetus for migration, all but three women interviewed send or have sent money and goods to their family in the village. The remaining three of course correspond to the women mentioned above who do not rely on family in the village for child-care.

A person's labour and the products of that labour are not usually considered one's own in Senegal and in many parts of Africa, so it follows that a young single woman would be expected to share her wages with her natal family, at least until she is married and has children (when she shares with her family of procreation). However, this does not explain why helping family would be the primary motivation for migration; indeed the villagers' expectation of receiving a portion of a migrant's wage could just as easily dissuade a person from migrating. Therefore, it is significant that this has become the

most important reason for migrating and it cannot be reduced to a simple response to traditional family obligation.

Few cash earning opportunities, recurring drought, and insignificant profits have put stress on families in rural areas. The desire of a young woman to help her family is not difficult to understand. As described by one woman, it is not easy to do nothing: "You know, to stay in front of your parents - your parents, you are doing nothing there, you are not earning money, it's a little tiring - tiring. But, if you are a young girl, you can work and at the end of the month you earn a little money - you can solve your problems, you can solve the problems of your sisters and parents." The degree of hardship varies from region to region and from year to year; however, women from many regions describe their motivations, some looking back as many as seventeen years, in the same terms. Considering the length of time and the variety of circumstances involved, it is clear that the conditions being described must range from ones of absolute deprivation where survival of the community is dependent upon a migrant's remittances to ones of relative poverty where helping the family represents raising the standard of living to meet certain expectations. It is not important which of these scenarios is true; what is important is that despite the range of rural conditions, this is a comfortable and acceptable way of rationalizing a move to the city. To the villager or to the urbanite this reasoning does not need to be explained; it is self-evident. The real or relative deprivation of the rural areas compared to the city is a collectively accepted truth. Put simply, "...life is often difficult, this is why once you reach a certain age you must come to the city, to work and to help your mother, because if you stay in the village you will not have the means, this is why you must come - to buy clothes and help your mother."

Helping the family also renders a sense of pride in the women. Making significant material contributions to their families and their villages enhances their role in the community. As one woman said referring to the financial help she is able to provide her family because of her job in Dakar, "...my father, he loves me too much because his mother did not have a daughter, and me I am the oldest of my father and my mother. His father, his parents are too happy with me, they love me, even the village they say that me, I am the sister of my father...." Often the labour of one or more family members appears to be a well-organized strategy to maximize the efforts of each individual within the family. Many of the women had younger siblings, male and female, who remained in the villages and whose education was being paid for by the migrants' remittances. However, only two of the women interviewed claimed that the decision to migrate was not their own and one of these women is Tukulor and not part of the groups that usually migrate. Any line of questioning that suggested that women did not make their own decisions was met with very firm denials that someone from their community would be forced to migrate. In fact, one respondent said that she came against the wishes of her mother and a study of a Diola community remarks that some young girls migrate without the permission of their parents (Lambert 1994: 162). This suggests that the idea of helping the family is not based on a direct sense of obligation. Women are not told they must migrate in order to maintain their families and thus reiterate this as their primary motivation. They are expressing their desire to improve the living conditions of both themselves and their families and this desire is reinforced through community approval as they are given respect for their participation in the community's cash economy.

Therefore, although helping the family reflects the real desires of the migrants and the real or relative needs of their families, the expression itself appears to have become a kind of idiom with which the migrant, the villagers, and the urban population can understand this phenomenon and speak about it in acceptable terms. Other reasons are communicated and considered appropriate and meaningful, but the desire to help one's family embodies many ideals that make it an especially powerful explanation. Helping family upholds traditional values of familial obligation that dictate a family's right over their children's labour. It is part of a discourse that reinsures that the migrants will not abandon their community. It characterizes her actions as selfless and as occurring within her household, particularly important in an Islamic society that does not always encourage the mobility of women. It is, in a way, a communicative manner of integrating female labour migration into the community as a socially acceptable institution, while at the same time limiting the nature of this institution by imposing certain ideals upon it.

Supporting Children

After young single women, divorced or widowed women are the next likely candidates to migrate in search of employment. Ten of the women interviewed have children, an unusually high number that is not representative of the population of migrant domestic workers as a whole, but which reflects the older age of the women who participated. Only six women said that children were a major factor in their decision to come to Dakar. As for the other four, three women had their children after they had migrated so their motivations are not described in terms of their motherhood; the fourth woman did have children before she came, but she gave poor rural conditions and a

desire to discover the region as her reasons for migrating. Of the six women who cited children as a primary motivation, three are divorced, two are widows, and one is still married, though she has not lived with her husband in over a decade.

"The mother of a family cannot just stay like so, she must work." There is a strong sense of obligation amongst the women who must support their children. These mothers may or may not receive financial help from the fathers. Some may leave their children in the care of their mothers in the village, reducing the costs of their upkeep, but they still must be able to contribute to their parents' households and pay for their children's schooling and clothes. Notably all of the children old enough to attend school were in school except the older son of one woman who helped his grandparents cultivate. The need to find employment under these circumstances may at first appear burdensome; however, it could also be characterized as liberating.

For one respondent, the woman who continues to consider herself married, employment in the city has allowed her to remain independent from her husband whom she continually found with other women. She has been to the legal authorities to divorce him; however, because she was never legally married, she does not require a divorce. He is currently working overseas and occasionally sends money, but she does not require his help to survive. Another woman left her husband because she felt he was negligent in his care for her and her children; he was spending a portion of his earnings on other women, money she felt they needed. She had married him against the wishes of her parents because he was of a lower caste, so when she divorced him she could not rely on her family for help. In these cases, migration and domestic work can be considered as

opportunities for women to change their circumstances. Migration presents an alternative to a seemingly hopeless situation (cf. Cole 1991; Vincent 1998).

Buying Clothing and Other Items

Eight women stated that buying clothes and other items was an important reason for coming to Dakar. Although I am attempting to tease them apart in my analysis, buying clothes, emulating friends, and a desire to discover the city are motivations that are very closely related. When women spoke of seeing their friends, they were usually implying a number of things that include an admiration for the clothes their friends could buy, a curiosity about their destination, and a fear of being left out or left behind. I will first discuss the three separately and then link them together.

There are few earning opportunities for young single women in the village. Their labour and the products of their labour are usually absorbed by the household or lineage. Married women will have rights over certain products (Lambert 1994: 187), or be given a plot of land to cultivate (Diop 1985: 164; Perrault 1996: 37), but a single woman is dependent upon her parents to acquire material goods. As young women begin to migrate and participate in the market economy, a portion of their earnings is spent on personal accoutrements; these possessions have become expectations for women of the village, expectations that are rarely met by their parents or by wages that could be earned locally.

Clothing is the most prized purchase of young women when they receive their wages. Yards of bright coloured material are bought and made into flowing *boubous*, a style of dress common to West Africa that consists of a large draping robe, usually a

rectangle of cloth with an opening at the head, worn over a *pagne*, a length of cloth wrapped around the waist as a skirt. Older women will adorn their heads with a matching swath of cloth called a *moussor* knotted into various fashions. Some women prefer elegantly tailored and embroidered blouses to wear over their *pagnes* or simple chemise-like tops; the combinations of colour, texture, patterns, and styles are endless. Next to clothing, shoes, body creams, and soap are also mentioned. These are the material enticements of migration to the city. "When they [girls who migrate] come here to work, at the end of the vacation [referring to seasonal migration] they buy beautiful clothes and shoes, that is what I like."

Clothes, shoes, body creams, these are items that enhance a woman's beauty and consequently heighten her self-esteem. The beauty they are intended to enhance is itself a form of social capital that raises a woman's status, and particularly for young single women, can be used to attract a husband. Men who migrate or who are from the city are typically considered better marriage prospects than their rural counterparts. As one woman said, "I prefer to stay - to live - to marry here because generally the men who are there cannot look after their wife very well." Appealing to the sensibilities of urban or migrant men, village women want the personal adornments that will render them more alluring. Discussions of how to attract and keep a husband often illustrate the value placed in certain commodities as tools of seduction. Besides the items mentioned above, incense used to perfume clothing or rooms, and strings of beads worn around the waist are considered essential items for young single or married women.

Seeing Friends

Seeing sisters, cousins, and friends come to Dakar draws others into the cycle of migration. Young girls grow up in the village watching their older sisters and cousins go to the city and return with beautiful clothes, different mannerisms, and stories of the city's curious lifestyle. The accounts of urban life are not all positive, but they leave an indelible impression. In many women, this impression develops into a desire to discover for themselves the mysteries of Dakar. They want to be the ones noticed for their stunning outfits or captivating stories. As well as enticing women to migrate, the presence of visiting or returning migrants is a constant reminder of a person's available options. The knowledge that this avenue is always a possibility can inform a person's decisions or be used as an alternate plan of action. Therefore, seeing friends is a motivation in itself, as one woman demonstrates when she says simply, "above all, many of my friends came here - to Dakar, and they work and earn a living;" or it serves to exemplify a means of solving a problem or reaching one's goals. "I saw my friends coming here, and since my mother was only cultivating, I decided to come and help, to look for work and send them money."

In some communities, virtually every young woman will participate in migration if only seasonally or temporarily (Cormier 1985: 270; Lambert 1994: 17). Under these circumstances, the decision to migrate may become a moot point as going to Dakar becomes as natural and expected as getting married or having children. If someone is not able to go, the feeling of being left behind could become more powerful than the original desire to migrate. Seeing friends, in this case, is more an act of understanding where one should be and measuring oneself against those standards. When one respondent was

asked if young women, other than students, remained in her village, preferring not to come to the city and work, she answered: "Those girls-they want to come, but the problem is that usually their parents are old, their mother is old, they are obligated to stay with her and help with the house work. The work of pounding the millet, to make powder from the millet, and to cook, this way for her, they do all the work."

Discovery

Three people mentioned discovering Dakar as a motivation to come. In most rural areas of Senegal, the contrast between the village and the city is a pronounced one. Going to Dakar presents the opportunity to see and experience different styles of dress, housing, eating, working, and living. There are more people, more buildings, more cars, constant noise, and activity. Homes are built with indoor plumbing and at night, the streets are lit with electric lights. For those who are inclined, there are dances, movies, sporting events, or the beach. There is, effectively, a lot to discover in the city; however, since it is not necessary to live or work in Dakar in order to experience it at least at a superficial level, it appears to be more of a secondary motivation rather than a primary one. This is illustrated as one woman reflects on why she came to Dakar, "It is because of money and also because of discovery, also to discover. If I stay [in the village] I will not discover many things."

Discovery, seeing friends, and buying clothes are expressions that are highly interconnected when they are examined for the meaning that is attributed to them. They are direct motivations for migration, but they are rendered more compelling as they take on implicit values and connotations that are socially recognizable. When women buy

clothes and shoes, wearing them proudly in the village, bestow gifts upon their relatives, or talk of Dakar with overtones of familiarity, they are acting out a kind of performance that is imbued with specific meaning. In Lambert's (1994) research on Diola migration, he describes this behaviour as the performance of urbanity. The purpose of this performance is to express one's personal identity as an urban identity, thereby enhancing one's status. This is done by practicing certain consumption patterns, mastering a particular knowledge of city living, and displaying these talents with an air of sophistication. As Lambert remarks, however, "Local understandings of these events of casual wandering through the village, the ease with which Wolof is spoken, and urban Senegalese clothing all rest on social, economic, political, and symbolic opposition of the city and the village" (1994: 240). The prestige that is gained through these performances is based on a kind of rural-urban dichotomy that presupposes the superiority of urban living. In this sense, the ability to go to the city and relate back to the village those symbols of urbanity that are acknowledged and esteemed is a marker of success that raises the migrant's status vis-à-vis the rural community. "Urban life is an achievement" (1994: 217); therefore, migration becomes an end in itself, as simply by participating in the process a person will gain a degree of respect. The process of migration is thus socially reinforced and participation encouraged.

However, not all migrants are equal; there are different levels of success. A young woman who returns to the village after an unsuccessful attempt at securing employment may attract the brief attention of some with accounts of her experiences, but she will be acutely aware of her failure to procure the goods or develop certain urban skills that are expected. As she gets older, failure to achieve these things will become

intolerable to the extent that a migrant will not usually visit their family in the village unless they have amassed a respectable amount of money. The respect and status that can be achieved through migration comes at a price, for cash and gifts are explicit expectations of a migrant's return. The prestige of the urban identity gained through migration is hinged upon the material benefits that can be had by the village. This is a reality that affects a person's connection to the village, as one woman illustrates, "I prefer to stay and live sometimes four or five years because if I return to the village, I have to buy many presents, because everyone hopes to have a present. They don't like you to come with nothing."

The performance of urbanity and the accompanying prestige may also influence a person's decision to remain indefinitely in the city. The ability to acquire material goods that have associated meaning and value and the possibility to express oneself in a different and esteemed manner can sometimes make the prospect of going back to the village to stay a dismal one. The values of urban living come to supersede those associated with the village. "When you come - when you stay in the village, you see the others [family and friends], you don't want to come, but if you come here you see the [unintelligible], the good clothes, the beautiful clothes, the beautiful shoes. You try to imitate them and then the city pleases you, you like the city more and more. This is why after all this you will no longer return to the village." In this example, it was not the urban identity that was performed in the village that was a motivation to migrate, but her own adoption of the practice once in the city that had meaning for her and consequently convinced her to stay.

Rural Hardship

Next to helping family, rural hardship was the most cited reason for coming to Dakar. Ten women said that the difficulties of their village were a significant motivation. However, it must be remembered that the categories are not absolute and their definitions and delineations are ambiguous; therefore, direct comparisons are less valuable than general understandings of what it is that resonates for women as they make their decision to migrate. The idea of rural hardship encapsulates a few different, but related ideas. Rural life is considered hard because of the physical labour that is required to make a living. Domestic tasks that are relatively easy in the city often involve a great deal of time and physical exertion in the village. Wood and water have to be gathered for cooking and cleaning. Basic foods need to be processed; for example, millet has to be pounded into flour or *cous-cous* (similar to rice). Rather than being bought, many vegetables or condiments are grown in the village and must be tended daily. Food crops and cash crops are the mainstay of village life; women help their husbands with their plots of land and often have small plots of their own to work. This work is considered very arduous, especially as it is weighed against the potential rewards. Recent droughts have lowered yields and, coupled with already low product prices, the perception of agriculture as providing a reasonable livelihood has been eroded.

The predominant complaint about rural life is the inability to earn cash. This cash is not only to ensure survival, as increased yields of subsistence crops may achieve that, but also to acquire household goods, clothing, furniture, and other items that are valued in the village. Agriculture provides a limited amount of cash and the money is not

necessarily allocated to the items listed above. Particularly for a young woman, if she wants to earn money so that she can purchase certain things, the city is the best option.

In these terms, migration is alternately conceptualized as a means of survival that is imposed and not chosen, or simply as a better and more appealing way of life. The women's perceptions of the village and their motivations for coming to the city are most effectively revealed and contrasted when left in their own words:

> There, there is not much money. When you eat today, you may not eat tomorrow. That is why I came.

> To remain in the village and cultivate the land, it is tiring, uh. But, to come here and earn money and help your parents, that's better.

> Nobody forced me [to come], I decided to come because I saw that there, if you cultivate the land, you don't earn very much, you only earn enough to live. That is why I decided to come here, to work and to satisfy my needs and also to help my family who are in the village.

> I prefer to live in Dakar, because there, life is hard.

While, the root of their hardships in the village can be related back to the structural and environmental conditions that were drawn out in the first chapter, and although most women implied some degree of difficulty in the village, the weight and image of this poverty varies. The numerous expressions of rural life and the inclusion or exclusion of rural hardship as a reason to migrate is somewhat explained by the fact that migrants originate from different regions and the state of these regions is not the same. Drought, overpopulation, under-development and inefficient rural policies have adversely, yet differentially, affected rural communities. The relative nature of the rural setting compared to that of the urban setting is important; however, how this distinction is understood is probably more consequential.

Independence

Only two women described migration as an avenue to independence. Many aspects of migration allow women to exercise more independence. Living in the city with other young women gives them more freedom of movement and their actions are not so closely scrutinized as in the village. The money they earn gives them freedom to buy and do things of their own accord and their contributions to their family give them a degree of social leverage. They may be able to avoid certain obligations in the village; for example, a few of the women stated that they had refused marriage arrangements made by their parents because they did not like their choice of husband or they felt he did not have potential to adequately support a family. However, there does not appear to be a collective awareness of independence as a consequence of or as a motivation for migration. In fact, on one occasion when a participant was asked whether she felt that she was more independent now compared to her time in the village, she responded very emphatically that life in the city was much more constraining than life in the village. She explained that working as a domestic means that she has to obey her *patronne*, her movements are organized, surveyed, and assessed by another person. Outside of work she is limited by her economic standing as to what she can do or buy. In her astute evaluation, this did not represent independence. Independence, like other concepts, is a very subjective term. As this woman illustrated, independence from certain social relations and obligations in the rural setting was only replaced by other dependencies in the city. The value of independence, therefore, comes from what set of constraints is considered more limiting or capable of hindering the outcome that is most desired.

Review and Reflect

According to the women involved in this research and supported by the results of other research (Cormier 1985; Lambert 1994), the decision to migrate to Dakar is overwhelmingly a personal one. Other family members may contribute to the decision-making process, but whatever influence they exert it is not pre-eminent in the mind of the woman migrating. The occurrence of young women who migrate without the approval of their parents also gives credence to this perspective. However, it would be naïve to portray these decisions as being made within a vacuum. Women choose to migrate within specific social, economic, political, and historical circumstances. The low profitability of agriculture and the lack of other forms of employment in the village cause the rural population to look for other alternatives. Introduction into the cash economy and a desire for the goods that money can buy directs and reinforces the drive for wage earning opportunities that are mainly found in urban centres. Therefore, women migrate because of the difficult conditions in the village and the relative opportunity that exists in the city to satisfy their needs and wants. This is true, but over-simplistic. Rural poverty and/or a desire for material goods do not automatically lead to the migration of women, as exemplified by the rarity of Haal Puular or Mande female labour migrants. Nor do they determine what age group will migrate, for how long, or with what expectations. The nature of the migration process is not uniform across cultures, genders, age groups, or class.

Migration is a social institution and as such, it has a structure that is grounded in the community's values and beliefs. Examining the motivations of women who migrate reveals more than just direct causes and consequences of migration; it provides an insight

into the structure of the process. The reasons women give are reflections of their conceptualization of what is valuable and meaningful to them and their communities. As individuals, there are certainly myriad reasons women will decide to migrate. If it is socially acceptable for women to migrate in search of work, then presence of this as an option will always be in the consciousness of a rural woman. Like any vocational or lifestyle choice, there are many minute practical and overriding ideological reasons why one choice is made over another. Subtle changes may suddenly or accumulatively make one alternative appear superior to the other. Interestingly, however, for the respondents, migration is almost exclusively described in terms of four overriding motivations: helping family, following friends and acquiring goods, and escaping a hard rural life. The limited nature of their reasons, the prevalence of their use, and the ease with which they are expressed suggest that these motives are both socially acceptable and mirrors of community ideals. They are tied to concepts that are communally understood and recognized, but at the same time their acknowledgement serves to shape and limit what form migration takes. Helping the family is connected to principles that dictate a person's responsibility to the family. It reflects the values of the community, while at the same time imposing certain conditions on a woman's decision to work in Dakar. On the other hand, a woman who sees her friends leaving and wants to buy clothes is expressing expectations and desires that are considered appropriate amongst her peers and if these are fulfilled, her experience will communicate a level of success. Finally, the portrayal of rural life as difficult and the need or aspiration to find work in the city is a sign of a collective, although ambiguous, perception of the relative or real poverty in the village.

Throughout the discourse that surrounds a woman's motivations are ideals that maintain a link between the woman and her community. In other words, the acceptance and performance of the principles embodied in the motives she communicates has the effect of bolstering certain material, emotional, and psychological connections. The idea of helping the family is thus connected to the villagers' expectation of remittances while the migrant is away and gifts when she visits or returns indefinitely. Similarly and possibly more significantly, the validation that a migrant experiences in the village through their involvement in the migration process grounds her experiences in her community and establishes an indelible bond. In simple terms, a young woman who sends food and money to her parents will be rewarded by their praise and develop a sense of pride in her achievements. The clothes she is able to buy will stir admiration in her village peers and her knowledge of urban life will be greeted with respect. This kind of validation cannot be underestimated. The working and living conditions of Dakar are not easy, though they may in some instances be favourable to those in the village, a clear distinction cannot be made and most comparisons rendered by the women are highly ambivalent. Moreover, migrants to Dakar generally comprise the lowest economic and social class. Most women have lower levels of education than their urban counterparts, they have little money, and they are marginalized for their lack of social sophistication. They live in the shantytowns or in lower cost housing and they cannot afford or obtain access to the symbols of success that are recognized in the city. Self-affirmation, status, and a sense of achievement for them are found in the village. In many ways, the social benefits that make migration meaningful and valuable are only possible through the

preservation of a connection with the village, even if this connection is more emotional than physical.

In addition to the motivations that are communicated, it is also interesting to examine motivations that are not. In other studies of female migrants (Diaw et al 1996; Lambert 1994), the accumulation of a dowry is sometimes stated as a reason for migrating. There are many reasons why the women in this study might not have mentioned it as a motivation. For one, the sample size might simply be too small and it inadvertently does not include women who would cite a dowry as a reason for migration, or they may have been unintentionally screened out by the selection of older women as participants. It might also reflect a decrease in the number of women who conceptualize migration in these terms. From this research it is not possible to determine which is true, but most likely it is a combination of the three. The practice of migrating to acquire household goods and clothing for a dowry is usually associated with seasonal or short-term migration because of the very specific goals of the endeavour. Older women tend to migrate for longer, often indefinite periods with short visits to the village. Therefore, the sample could very well exclude the migrants who are most likely to respond in this manner. However, at the same time, there does appear to be a trend towards longer and more permanent migration (Lambert 1994) even for young women, which would make the elicitation of the dowry as a reason for migration meaningless because it does not explain the need for long absences.

In other studies (Diop 1965; Lambert 1994), it has been suggested that women also migrate in order to improve their choice of marriage partners. Village men who have migrated to the city or native Dakarois are sometimes considered preferable

husbands. Many of the women complained that village husbands cannot take care of their wives because of their limited financial resources and they professed a desire to marry migrant or city men. One woman also explained that her sister was considering a divorce from her husband in the village because he was unable to provide for their family. However, not all women prefer men from the city; amongst the women interviewed there was a fairly even split between those who wanted an urbanite or a villager as a husband. Again, it is not easy to speculate on why this would not be articulated as a motivation even though it appears to be true for some women. Possibly, it is not a reason why women migrate, but a decision that is made once they are in the city. On the other hand, it could be a reason that is too personal or intimate to relate to an outsider. However, it is very likely that the exclusion of this as a motivation is also related to a lack of social condonation of this as an explicit purpose for migration. People may know it to be true, but it is not emphasized or reinforced through the common discourse of migration.

The conceptualization of the migration experience reveals the actual conditions that propel migration and the social conditions that influence its character. In some cases, the social mechanisms that favour migration have made the process almost self-perpetuating. This is evident when young girls organize themselves to go to the city in massive numbers. Migration has become so embedded in the practices of some communities that it appears wholly natural. The girls make their own decisions to go, but this might be done without any real reflection as to why and under a considerable amount of social pressure even if it is not explicit.

Chapter Seven

Rural-Urban Links

Beyond a community's comprehension of migration's function and meaning, there are structures and specific social organizations that support migration and the continuity between the city and the village. The physical, material, and psychological presence of the city in the village and the village in the city is forged through exchanges of people, goods, ideas, and desires. Migrants depend on village-based social relations in the city to ease their transition, but also on relations in the village should they need to return temporarily or permanently. In turn, the rural population depends on the remittances sent by migrants to improve their quality of life. Face-to-face encounters, the reception of food or items that are associated with a specific locale, and the communication of ideas, beliefs, or events, all play their part in creating a social space for migrants that is neither of the village or the city. For example, groups of young women who migrate and live together in the city are not adopting urban practices; to the contrary, this type of organization is unusual in Dakar. Neither, however, has this practice been transferred from the village. It is a practice that embodies and maintains the values of the village through social ties and the common goal of aiding the family without assuming large expenses in the city, but this is achieved by transforming the function of recognized gender and age categories. The social process of migration shapes the composition of the places and people at either end of the migration pattern and includes both migrants and non-migrants, villagers and urbanites. The kinds of social organizations and structures and the manner in which they are deployed in the

migration process vary between individuals, communities, and cultural groups. However, a general discussion of common patterns can highlight in general terms how the process of migration and the rural-urban connection are established and maintained.

Village-Based Urban Networks

When women come to Dakar, they will usually have a prearranged place to live. They rely on social networks that are generated from their community. Most often, migrants rely on associations with people of their own age and gender. They will join sisters, cousins, or friends who are already established in Dakar, or a group will decide to leave together, but rely on the assistance of an experienced migrant to help them set up. Half of the women (13) interviewed lived with other young females when they came to the city. Two women lived with their brothers, and one with her brother and sister, meaning that over half of the respondents depend on intra-generational relations. Five women lived with their aunts and one with her uncle. Two of the remaining three lived alone; the other lived with friends who did not originate from her village. In all, twenty-three of the twenty-six participants counted on village-based relationships to facilitate their migration. Migrants depend on these and other relationships for a number of purposes. Shared accommodation reduces the living costs of the migrants, so that they can use a larger portion of their wages to buy personal items and to send to their families. Roommates pool the cost of rent as well as other household expenses including water, fuel for cooking or lighting, food, candles, or electricity. They help each other find jobs and teach newcomers the necessary skills for living and getting around in Dakar.

Roommates can also provide a social net should one of their group be without work for a time.

However, social networks from the village extend far beyond living arrangements. Migrants do not live in isolation. If there is not an older and more experienced migrant amongst a group of young women, there will usually be one or more persons who act as guardians. Often it is an older sister, cousin, or brother who does not live with the women, but who accepts a certain level of responsibility for their welfare. This person will probably live close by and periodically check on the individuals, acting as a counsellor or disciplinarian should it be required. One woman, who herself had come as a girl of ten years, now maintains the lease on a room which she keeps available for migrants from her village. Parents trust her to look out for their daughters and to keep them abreast of any concerns. Even without a guardian, a migrant's movements are monitored by many other members of her village. Members of the same village or rural community often live in a limited number of neighbourhoods, so it is not unusual to casually run into a villager or have someone drop by the house.

As well as informal social interactions, there are also formal ones. Most of the respondents (18) had periodic meetings with other villagers. These gatherings range from formal associations with regular weekly or bi-monthly meetings to casual get-togethers that are spontaneously arranged. Some are based on consanguineal relations, but most are based on age groups of one or both genders. Lambert's (1994: 91-95) research of a Diola village revealed that village-based urban associations had begun by including all migrants from a rural community, but they have segmented over the years and they are now organized according to quarters – a traditional subdivision of the

village. Through these interactions, migrants have a source of emotional support. Their adaptation to a foreign environment with a very different set of living conditions and social customs is made easier because of the knowledge they gain from experienced migrants and the buffer that is created between the migrant and the urban population. The migrant, far from experiencing a sense of isolation or alienation, will usually have a large social network she can tap into for companionship, guidance, material support, or diversion.

Apart from the social aspect, formal associations will often require that members contribute towards a fund on a regular basis. This money will be used for a variety of purposes, but the two most commonly stated purposes are to put on dances in the city or to organize a return to the village. The dance in the city will be for all members of a village or rural community and any of their Dakarois friends. These dances present an opportunity for men and women of the village to socialize together and for a large number of villagers to congregate together in one place. Organized returns to the village serve to reduce the costs of transportation, but the expense of a community celebration upon their return is at times included in the arrangement. It is not uncommon for urban associations to fund different festivities in the village and occasionally they will take on projects that are more substantial like supplying the community soccer team with equipment, buying school supplies, or building a mosque.

Formal and informal association with other villagers provides support for migrants, but it also places the migrant within a web of social relations that embodies the values, mores, and beliefs of the village. The behaviour, attitude, and actions of a migrant will be observed and held up to the standards embraced by her community. Fall

(1998: 137), an urban sociologist in Dakar, states, "...associations of people originating from the same region or the same village are active in the city, where they play a key role in maintaining a privileged relationship with home areas or in preventing total assimilation into the urban environment, sometimes by reinforcing social control as in the case of young Diola maids." This is not to say that some urban values and practices are not adopted and accepted. Ideals of the city are communicated back to the village and in some cases, they are absorbed and given culturally specific meaning, but this occurs as a kind of ongoing negotiation that does not diminish the immediate influence of that culture on its constituents.

Urban-Village Connections

The individuals who make up a migrant's social network are in constant flux. There are always newcomers to the city or people returning home. Someone may just be back from a visit home or parents might be visiting their children in the city. The persistent flow of people maintains a line of communication between those in the city and the village. Letters, messages, or greetings are passed on through the traffic of people, so that even if a migrant cannot phone or visit her family she will be kept informed about their well being as they will be of hers. Contact is also maintained with the village through regular visits. All but four of the women interviewed return to their village at least once a year. Those who do not include the Tukulor woman and the three women who do not send money home (although the response of one woman was unclear), which suggests a substantial break with their communities, confirmed by the fact that three of the four do not have village based social networks in Dakar beyond

immediate family. The regularity of visits varies from almost weekly to yearly. Yearly visits are usually organized around a holiday, most often *Tabaski*, an Islamic holiday that commemorates the sacrifice of Abraham, or the August 15th celebration of the assumption of Virgin Mary. Only one woman returned home for the harvest season. Those who make yearly visits will often stay a couple of weeks, but those who make frequent visits will only stay for a couple of days. How often women return home will depend on the distance between Dakar and the village, their financial situation, the ability to leave work, and their personal desire.

Throughout the year and upon their return home women send money and goods to their family. The amount of money and frequency of remittances range tremendously and depend on whether the woman is currently employed, what her salary is, and what her personal expenses are. Most women said they would send money home monthly when they are employed and other items sporadically throughout the year. They rely on their social connections to transfer the money to their parents, sending it with anyone who is planning a trip home. Items that are sent home are numerous and include both food and material goods. The most common items mentioned by the respondents were rice, oil, sugar, clothing, shoes, soap, school equipment, household items, and furniture. Most women said that money was sent to their mothers, who in turn would spend it on food or items similar to those listed above. In return, women in the city will sometimes receive gifts from their family. Generally, this will be whatever food is cultivated by their family. Millet cous-cous or flour is particularly favoured, but peanuts and fruit are also very common.

Women also sustain strong connections with the village because of their family situation. Out of the ten women with children, five currently leave their children with their mother in the village. One woman left her children with her grandmother until her grandmother died, the other lost custody of her children to her husband and they remain in the village of her former mother-in-law, though she visits from time to time. Having children in the village builds a particularly strong bond between a woman and her village. The responsibility to contribute monetarily to her family increases and her dependence on their assistance ensures a continued and important relationship. The decision to leave the child with family in the village is not entirely an economic one. Money is a factor as child-care is expensive and food and other living costs are higher in the city. However, the decision is also felt to be in the best interest of the children. The village is considered a better place to grow up; the child will be surrounded by family, whereas in the city the mother will only be able to afford them a few hours a day. Furthermore, all of the women interviewed stated that they wanted their children to go to school. In the village, education is less expensive and in some cases easier to access due to overcrowding in the city; therefore, residence in the village might increase the chances of the child attaining an education. Leaving her children in the village will not create a moral dilemma for the mother; although she loves and misses her children she does not doubt what is best for them. She will not be considered negligent nor will her situation arouse sympathy. Children, in an African context, belong not only to the mother and father, but also to their lineages. This relates to rights and to responsibilities. Children are 'fostered out' to more privileged relatives in order to gain a formal or informal education or to strengthen social ties between families (Page 1989: 402; see also Goody

1982). Women will also leave children with other relatives to ease household expenses, help an ailing grandparent, or as in the case of one of the participants, to form the family of a childless couple. In this example, the woman was put in the care of her mother's sister who lived in the village. Her younger sister was also put in her aunt's care for a time while she was ill. When she recuperated, she was sent back to her mother, but she did not remain. She had come to know her aunt as her mother and she cried daily for her company; feeling it was best for the child, her mother sent her back indefinitely. The social unit in Senegalese society is rarely defined as the nuclear family. Parental care is a responsibility shared by many; it is not exclusive to the parents, nor do the parents have the sole rights over their children or the products of their labour. Consequently, it allows for more flexible family arrangements. In Bledsoe and Isiugo-Abanihe's (1989) study of child-fosterage among the Mende of Sierra Leone for example, they look at children who are fostered to 'grannies'. 'Granny' refers to any woman, often the grandmother, but also other related and in some cases non-related females. They assert that the fosterage of children to grannies is considered mutually beneficial and is often instigated by the granny in order to secure her own welfare. In a rural setting, an older woman can ensure she will receive remittances from absent relatives if she assumes the care of their children. Her future prospects are also made more secure as she can hope to instil a sense of responsibility in the next generation, so she will be taken care of.

Summary

Village-based urban associations, the transfer of money and goods to rural areas, regular visits, and the extension of close family ties between households all contribute to

the continuum of social space between urban and rural places. Migrants rely on their families in the village to help them prepare for their trip to the city. They sometimes provide the initial financing or arrange for accommodations. Once in the city, the migrant depends on other villagers for material and emotional support, but at the same time these relations reinforce the migrant's commitment to the village and their family. A reliance on people in the village and in the city keeps the migrant in a set of relationships that results in the preservation of rural customs and ideals. Almost half of the participants professed an intention to return permanently to the village; therefore, it is a matter of self-interest to maintain links and to respect the values of their community. Whether these intentions are realized or not, they will have a profound effect on the person's sense of place and the meaning they give to their actions in the city. As time passes, a migrant may lose the desire to return and her commitment to the village might diminish. She may develop more urban-based relationships, visit her village less, and send fewer remittances, particularly if she marries someone who is not from her village. However, a complete rupture in relations is uncommon, and there are still a significant number of women who return to the village when they are married or who marry migrants from their community (Fall 1998: 138; Lambert 1994: 139).

Goods and practices are also transferred between places. The acquisition of certain goods from the city takes on particular meaning in the village, just as goods from the village will come to have specific significance in the city. Eating and professing a preference for millet *cous-cous* is a symbol of one's heritage and sense of connection to rural life. Organizing *saabars*, a traditional Serer dance with a group of drummers, in the city or holding regular dances with DJs in the village transform the space in which

they occur and the social context of the event. The physical presence of place is changed through the movement of objects and technologies, as is the symbolic meaning of those things. The extension of relations over space, the exchange of goods and knowledge, and the emotional and psychological connection that migrants experience with their village of origin change what it is to be a villager or an urbanite. Social space is disconnected from physically bounded place, in that the reproduction of culture within social space occurs through processes and structures that are a result of connection between distant locales.

Chapter Eight

Conceptualizing the Urban and the Rural

Since Raymond Williams (1973) wrote *The Country and the City*, there has been an interest in the conceptualization of place, specifically urban and rural place and the contrast that is drawn between them (e.g. Comaroff and Comaroff 1987; Ferguson 1992; Gardner 1993). For Williams, the country and the city, in the minds of those who evoke their images, symbolize more than points in geography with specific features. In literature and in common speech, the country and the city are metonyms for dichotomous concepts that can be linked to historical processes and popular attitudes. From this perspective, Williams examined portrayals of the urban and the rural across the centuries in England. He contends that oscillating presentations of the country as pastoral peace and solidarity or regressive impoverishment are contrasted to urban presentations of progress and prosperity or impersonal and immoral development as reflections of people's changing reactions and adjustment to capitalist industrialization. How these places are imagined depends on historical and temporal conditions, but also on the circumstances, biases, and motives of the individual who is offering the characterization.

For migrant women of Senegal, images of the village and the city are central themes in the narration of their lives. As migrants, depictions of the city and the village are not only projected from one place onto another, women live between these places and constantly negotiate and renegotiate their relations to them. In these images, attitudes towards migration, urban and rural life, and capitalist and non-capitalist economies are revealed. Places are imbued with meaning so that viewpoints, intentions, and

motivations can be represented. Consequently, representations can be deconstructed for what they say about the perspective of the speakers.

When the village was discussed with women during the interviews two predominant yet contradictory images arose. The first was that of hardship and poverty. In these representations, the village is depicted as a place from which the women have fled. Their descriptions include words such as 'hard', 'tiring', and 'difficult'. They say there is no money and they speak of being poor. As one woman simply stated, "There is nothing there." Conversely, they also speak of the village as a reliable and welcome place. They associate the village with family, solidarity, and reciprocity. They say the village is 'better', 'beautiful', and 'good'. Mostly, the village is described as a place they know and the place where their family is, "There, there are my parents, my friends, I know it better there, that is why I would like to live there in the village. I was born there, I know there." Notably, it is also appreciated as a place where nothing is bought. "There is a difference [between the city and the village] because here everything you eat, you buy with your own money, but in the village, there is often fruit, there are often fruit and other trees you can pick."

Similarly, the city is also alternately associated with negative and positive attributes. Like the village, Dakar is described as 'difficult', 'hard' and 'tiring', but it is also thought of as 'dangerous', and 'bad'. It is sometimes depicted as strange, frightening, and harsh, and women said they often miss their homes and want to return to the village. The most common complaint, however, is that in the city you need money to live and without it you are vulnerable. "Here, if you don't find work you have to stay there where they were (rue Assane Ndoye). You have nothing to eat; you don't have the

means to pay for a room. That is the only problem that I find here in Dakar." Paradoxically, Dakar is appreciated for the very same principle. In almost every case, women remark that the city is 'good' or 'better' because of the ability to earn money. "I like Dakar a little because I can earn money, but I would like to earn a lot." Apart from the financial possibilities, women also say they like Dakar for its diversity and animation; they say things are convenient, and there are more services.

The women's experiences shape their image of the city and the village, but how they initially interpret their experiences depends on internalized values and priorities. The conceptualizations of rural and urban life conveyed above reveal underlying beliefs and cherished principles that influence the portrayals. The depiction of the village as a familiar and beautiful place characterized by communal relationships shows a predilection for ideals of tradition and continuity. The constancy and dependability of the village is contrasted with the insecurity and instability of the city. Familiarity is contrasted with the unknown and reciprocal and familial relationships are set in opposition to unequal and impersonal ones. Social relations that extend from the village or millet *cous-cous* from home are representations of the village in the city. They are physical reminders of the positive concepts associated with village life and they act as buffers from a sense of alienation. Furthermore, although both the city and the village were described in terms of being good or bad, there are implicit references of morality when they speak of the village as good and the city as bad. In other words, the village is bad because the work is hard and there is no money; while, the city is simply bad. The symbolic opposition of the city and the village in moralistic terms when the city is associated with monetary exchange and the village is associated with reciprocal and non-

monetary exchange is not unusual. Moving from his discussion of England, Williams (1973: 288) notes that the introduction of capitalism has everywhere had a forcible impact:

> And Chinua Achebe, who in *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God* showed the arrival of the alien system in the villages, shows us the complicated process of educational mobility and new kinds of work in the city in *No Longer at Ease* and *Man of the People*. Yet we have got so used to thinking of common experiences through the alienating screens of foreignness and race that all too often we take the particularity of these stories as merely exotic. A social process is happening there, in an initially unfamiliar society, and that is its importance. But as we gain perspective, from the long history of the literature of country and city, we see how much, at different times and in different places, it is a connecting process, in what has to be seen ultimately as a common history.

The negative assessment of the market economy, i.e. the city, represents a perceived threat to traditional systems and the values they embrace. In Fiji, the commodity and the gift symbolize a similar opposition, where monetary exchange is depicted as going against the 'Fijian way' because it threatens certain Fijian social structures and relationships (Toren 1989: 160). When the participants in this study articulated their preference for the village because everything is free and set this against a disdain for the city because everything must be bought they are illustrating their own community's struggle with the social transformation that accompanies the incorporation of a new exchange system. The women's insecurity and sense of dependence are superimposed onto their perception of urbanity and contrasted against the stability and familiarity they associate with rural life.

The images of the city and the village presented by Senegalese women are not, however, unequivocal. Their depictions are ambivalent and contradictory. On the one hand, the village is difficult because there is no money; on the other hand, it is good

because there is no need for money. Contradictory expressions of the village and city at times reflect an individual desire to stay or return home. A woman who is comfortable in the city may represent the village as difficult and the city as a place of animation and opportunity, thereby justifying her presence there. However, although some women had a clearly negative or positive impression of urban life, most women were ambivalent and expressed internal contradictions. When women were asked if they would like to return to the village ten responded affirmatively, six negatively, and ten said they would ideally like to return, but felt it was unrealistic or they would do so only under certain conditions. These answers are somewhat misleading and over-simplified though as most women, even if they answered with a direct yes or no, would reveal conflicting emotions with further discussion. Looking at a few dialogues will highlight this point.

Dialogue #1

Me: Would you like to return to the village permanently?

Interviewee: Return to the village permanently?

M: Yes

I: No. I would like to marry here and go there from time to time. Life here in Dakar pleases me. When you go to the village, there is no work. There are only the fields. Now there is no more rainy season, you cannot work. I would like to stay here, and send money, to work.

M: Do you prefer the lifestyle here – do you prefer the lifestyle here or in the village?

I: I prefer life in the village, the lifestyle of the village. Here you buy water to drink, you buy electricity, you pay rent, whereas in the village, you pay nothing, you are at home. There is forage(?), there are also fruits, charcoal, you take what you want, and the wood

there in the fields, you go to the fields and you will find wood there. But here, if you want something here, you will pay, you will pay for it.

Dialogue #2

Me: What do you like about Dakar?

Interviewee: The work.

M: The work itself or the possibility to earn money?

I: Yes.

M: You like the work itself?

I: The work and the money, if in the village there was work, I wouldn't come.

M: Okay. Can you describe a little what is the difference between life in the village and life in the city?

I: Yes. [unintelligible]...and there in the village there is not. If you are sick her or you need to go there, you need a - you will take a car here and you are there quickly. But in the village, there are not any yet. There are carts (with horses). And if you want to go to...

M: If you want to go where?

I: To the dispensary. There in the village it is far and if you don't have a cart, you don't have a way. And here the food is not the same; it is not the same as the village. Because in the village we eat millet for breakfast, here breakfast is bread. Dinner is not the same; dinner in Dakar here is not the same as there in the village. There it is rice, here we eat *Thieb*, rice and fish; there in the village we eat rice and fish but [unintelligible]. There, there are not any mangos. Here, there are cars; there, there are carts.

M: Anything else?

I: The rooms we make there, we make them with straw.

Dialogue #3

Me: Would you like to return permanently to the village one day?

Interviewee: Yes.

M: Why?

I: To go to my parents.

M: For your family?

I: Yes.

M: And do you like the lifestyle there?

I: Yes. If I have a husband here, I will stay. If I have a husband here I will stay.

M: What would you prefer, to marry there or to marry here?

I: Here.

M: You prefer here?

I: Yes.

M: What do you like here?

I: The life, the life pleases me.

M: Yes, why?

I: If you have a good job here you can have your own money, but the life in Casamance (region of her village) is better.

M: Ah yes?

I: Ziguinchor (department of her village) is better than here.

M: Oh yeah.

I: Here it is because of money.

M: ...and the work.

I: The work, the money, if you have a good job you have money, it's not a problem. But in Ziguinchor for the life, Casamance is more beautiful than here.

I: What is beautiful there, what do you like there?

M: You do what you want, you eat well, the fruit there, you don't buy it; it is you who goes in the forest to bring food. But here, if you want to buy something you have to take money to go and buy; if you want something you have to go and buy it with money here. Here, it is not good.

The ambivalence illustrated in these dialogues is a sign of their uncertainty, particularly as to the attainability of economic security. There is more occurring than a simple dichotomy of rural/good and urban/bad. In Gardner's article (1993), *Desh-Bidesh: Sylheti Images of Home and Away*, she discusses how images of home and away are characterized by competing ideals and symbols of power. Sylhet is a place of spiritual and emotional wealth, whereas away, referring to London, is a place of material prosperity. Similarly, the conflicting images of Dakar and the rural areas are evidence of competing ideals. The village is esteemed for the ability to simply take what is needed, but it is an idealized image. People in the village pay taxes, and buy food items, seed, fertilizer, and other equipment. They also appreciate and desire the things that money can buy. They want clothes, shoes, and household items and list these as a prime reason for coming to Dakar. The city, therefore, becomes a place of opportunity. As migrants moving between places these women are particularly vulnerable to the conflicting ideals. Their lives and the meaning they give to their lives are being constantly challenged by competing images and contradictory desires. As Gardner (1993: 14) states,

> ...while it is the *desh* [home] that provides true nutrition, that heals, that people invest in emotionally, and that so many migrants eventually wish to return to, it is *bidesh* [away] to which they now aspire. The balancing of these seemingly contradictory sets of ideals and perceptions is a major concern in Talukpur. It is also the cultural and emotional content of what has been termed the 'myth of return' amongst South Asians who have settled in Britain, but see their lives here as temporary and dream of going home (Dahya 1973; Anwar 1979).

The ambivalent conceptualizations that the respondents depict are metaphors for their struggle. They are symbols of the uncertainty they feel in an urban environment and in some measure to the resentment they feel towards the need for money, their ultimate reason for coming to Dakar. The value of the city is usually qualified in terms of money and, when it is difficult to acquire, a migrant will express her doubts and fears in alternate images of the village and city. This was succinctly put by one woman when she said, "But if you don't have money you would not say that Dakar is good." Their lives are situated in a tenuous balance between the village and the city and their sense of place is mirrored in the accompanying images.

Chapter Nine

Implications of Culture

The preceding chapters have demonstrated the social nature of migration. A community's values, beliefs, and practices all influence the form migration will take and this directly impacts the lives of the individuals who partake in migration or who benefit from the enterprise. Migration is also a social process that is mutable. Its form will change as different needs or opportunities arise and as people's priorities and perspectives alter. As a social institution, migration is also culture specific. Its form may be the same or differ between cultures, but in all cases it is understood and practiced in a culturally determined manner. Ethnic groups in Senegal are identified according to varying degrees of cultural distinction. Amongst the urban populations, some distinctions have been eroded, but in the rural areas and amongst the population moving between the village and the city, affiliation to an ethnic group has cultural import. Thus, cultural distinctions between ethnic groups in Senegal can be examined for their effect on the migration process.

Until now, this research has focused on general qualities of the social organization of migrants, motivations, and the connection to the village that Serer, Diola, and Wolof women share. However, between these groups differentiation exists and will affect a woman's experience. Differences in how women take part in migration according to their ethnic affiliation have been noted by other authors (Diaw et al. 1996; Diop 1965; Gonzales 1994; Sy 1991). This research tends to confirm the observations made in other studies, but as the number of participants from ethnic groups other than

Serer is small, its value rests in its illustrative ability. Therefore, this section attempts to demonstrate the difference between the Diola, Serer, and Wolof experiences by using case studies from each group. In doing this, the variation that exists between communities and individuals is being overlooked, but the general patterns that influence women's lives can be readily grasped.

Haal Pulaar and Mande

It was already noted that Haal Pulaar and Mande women do not usually migrate as independent female labourers. They migrate with their parents, to relatives for schooling; as wives, they will join their husbands or move their families to Dakar to be more accessible to husbands overseas (Diop 1965; Gonzales 1994; Traore 1994). When women of these groups do migrate in search of labour for various individual reasons, they do not have access to the same types of age and gender groups that other women have. Women who are in the city are there under different circumstances and will not have the same needs. Furthermore, the absence of female labour migration in these communities will sometimes result in the social ostracism of that migrant, making it difficult for her to draw on the social resources that might otherwise be available. The two participants involved in this study of Mande and Haal Pulaar ethnicity exemplify the problems that women can face when they do not have social mechanisms in their community that facilitate female migration. Neither woman belongs to a village-based association or has regular social gatherings with villagers. They both rely on immediate family and relationships with Dakarois for social interaction and financial assistance. They characterize the city as a harsh environment and people as unreliable and self-

interested. The life and words of one woman, a Tukulor from Fouta in northeast Senegal, illustrate these issues.

Astou came from Fouta with her father ten years ago. He had migrated for employment, and at the request of her mother, Astou accompanied him to find work for herself. Shortly after, her father passed away, but Astou remained in Dakar, living with her two older brothers and working to support her mother and her younger siblings. Now, nine years later, Astou is nineteen, single, and she continues to work as a domestic. She has never returned to her village for a visit, though her mother regularly comes to Dakar. She does not wish to return to the village permanently; rather, her aspiration is to find work overseas or to marry someone with financial security. She fears returning to the village would result in a forced marriage and she does not wish to marry a villager. "Often, most of the women of my age, they are given in marriage. Women marry early in the country – in the Tukulor villages, around fifteen, thirteen, or twelve years old. I don't want to return there because if I return they will force me into a marriage or things that I don't want. Even though it is difficult here, I want to stay." Astou's family is attempting to arrange her marriage. She is not opposed to an arranged marriage provided the man has suitable means. She has had two proposals of marriage from men living overseas; one had been living in Gabon and was heading for the United States, and the other is living in France. So far, these proposals have been refused because Astou is a noble and they are of a lower caste. Her family is opposed to her marrying someone of a lower caste; on the other hand, Astou has refused marriage with men whom she felt did not have enough money.

When Astou is without work, she relies on her brothers or other family from the village for help. She continues to live with her brothers and contributes to the household by paying for food, water, and electricity. She is also expected to perform the domestic tasks; if she doesn't she may face ridicule, as she explains, "I prepare the meals for my brother and me. Because often when I don't prepare [them], if I go in – in my - to my uncles or somewhere, the people will say - they will mock me, they will say that this one, she doesn't want to be married. This person or that person - she doesn't want them, she doesn't want to work either." She has friends from her village, but they do not work as domestic workers and they do not organize formal meetings or events or form any financial collection. She also has friends from Dakar and the social gatherings she attends usually include both villagers and Dakarois. The extent of these relationships, however, is revealed in her response when asked if she liked Dakar, "It's okay – so-so – because the way the people in the village hear it, it's not like that. They believe if you come here, people here will help you, but it is the opposite. If you don't work, you have nothing." Although Astou does not want to return to the village, she says she could if she wanted, but she might face some criticism. She says, "Sometimes – sometimes the people in the village view it [migration] negatively, and they say that she left for the city, not for work, but for other things because if she wanted to work she could stay here because there is work in the village." But Astou disagrees, saying that since the drought there is no longer any work. She says, "The rainy season is finished" (meaning that there is no longer a rainy season due to drought) and she needs to help her mother.

Despite her determination to remain, Astou's view of Dakar is particularly negative. She warns that often "you see bandits, aggressors who come to rob you. And

that, that is not good, or you see certain people they say they will help you, but they don't help you. If you don't work, nobody helps you." She continues that "here, it is not safe. Often you see men who try to take advantage of you or rape you, there are always problems. This is why my mother when she is in the village and you are here in Dakar, she is never tranquil, she is always thinking of you." She says if women come to Dakar they should "be intelligent, if not the men will deceive you."

Astou's negative impression of Dakar and her feeling of being without recourse in times of need are related to the absence of social networks that exist for women in her circumstances. She does have family connections and is involved with her community, but the links are somewhat tenuous. Unlike other migrants, she has not visited her village since she left and she fears returning because she may be forced into a marriage or be criticized by other villagers for her decision to work in Dakar. Her motivations to come to Dakar are not unlike other migrants'; she wished to help her family and escape difficult rural conditions, but these motives are not generally accepted by the community, at least not as they relate to women. Moreover, the importance of her monetary contributions to the family do not appear to be as highly appraised as they are in other communities and there is more social pressure to marry and value placed on her role as a wife.

Wolof

The Wolof, Diola and Serer all participate in female labour migration. They follow similar patterns of migration that stem from similar motivations; however, some differentiation can be identified. The Wolof, in particular, stand apart from the two other

groups. In general, Wolof women do not migrate in search of work as commonly as Diola and Serer women. The Wolof are considered to be more hierarchical and patriarchal than the Diola and Serer (Sy 1991: 31). However, women are active in the market economy. Most women cultivate their own plot of land and have rights over the revenues from the sale of the crop. They are also responsible for the supply of condiments they need in the daily preparation of meals (Diop 1985: 164; Stomal-Weigel 1988: 29). Although it is not as common for Wolof women to migrate to Dakar, it is not prohibited and young single women participate in seasonal, temporary, or permanent migration (Faye 1981: 150). The women who do migrate usually do so in a familial context (see also Diaw et al. 1996). Rather than migrating with other women her age, she will go alone and join relatives already living in Dakar. Normally, this will be an older relative with a family and she will be absorbed as an extension of that family. Furthermore, Wolof women from the villages enter into a wider variety of employment. They are more commonly 'fostered' children, they may obtain factory work, or they will become active in the informal sector as merchants. The Wolof are a highly urbanized population. They have, for many years, settled in Dakar and most rural people have at least a few well-established urban relatives (Sy 1991: 31-32). The rural areas they inhabit are located very close to Dakar and extend throughout the peanut zone. Their participation in cash cropping and their membership in Islamic brotherhoods have, at least until recently, privileged the Wolof in comparison to many other rural populations. Drought, low peanut prices, and the overuse of land have threatened the privilege of the peanut basin and have caused out-migration from the older areas to new frontier lands and to the city in search of temporary or permanent employment. Until about thirty

years ago, migration to the city was infrequent, but it increased after the droughts of the seventies and has continued to grow since then (Mackintosh 1989). These factors, the more patriarchal nature of the society, the substantial familial connections in the city, and the relative success of the rural communities, have all influenced how Wolof women participate in and experience migration.

The women interviewed all came to Dakar on their own. One who came when she was older, after having children, worked as a live-in and later took up her own residence. The other two came to live with their aunts. They all send money to the village and return on occasion, usually once or twice yearly, except the first woman who returns more regularly to see her children. They socialize with Dakarois and with a few people from their village, but most social connections to villagers are with close family. None of the women had a strong desire to return permanently to the village.

Soda is a single woman from the region of Thies, not far from Dakar. She is twenty five years old and came to Dakar when she was ten. Her parents cultivated millet and peanuts in the village, but they abandoned their field and came to Dakar four years ago. Her father is retired and her mother sells sandwiches. Soda now lives with her parents. She sent money to her family monthly until they came; now she continues to contribute to the household finances and sends money to her grandmother in the village. She visits the village once a year for the celebration of the prophet Mohammed's birth. When she first came to Dakar she says she "wanted to return, but with the time, you get used to it and you don't want to return anymore." Now, she would prefer to stay and marry in Dakar, saying that there is no way of earning money in the village and men there cannot look after their wives very well. Soda says there are many women her age

who have come to the city from her village, but she does not socialize with them because her friends are from Dakar. On the other hand, her family, those in the village and Dakar, have formed an association where each member is required to contribute a small sum of money. The money is used to buy food and drinks for the family at gatherings and celebrations. When asked if she hoped to marry, she replied, "For now, I am happy helping my parents, I don't really need to, even if I wanted to get married I would want to marry someone with money, that way I could help my parents."

In comparison to Diola and Serer, Wolof women rely more heavily on close familial ties to facilitate their migrations. They appear to become more integrated into urban life as their host family will often be well established and introduce the migrant into more urban based social relations. The limited interaction with villagers other than family may also have consequences for their ultimate return to the village. Their friends and peers instil urban values that challenge those of the village and reduce their desire to return. The Wolof are already an urbanized population; the assimilation of villagers into an urban lifestyle is more easily accommodated and less negatively stereotyped. The ability to rely on family, to develop social connections with Dakarois, and to have community acceptance for the participation in migration also influences the overall impression of Dakar, which was essentially positive though still linked to the opportunity to earn money.

Serer

Distinctions between the Serer and the Diola in terms of female migration are harder to discern. These are the two groups most associated with the category of migrant

domestic workers. The Serer are the most numerous, making up approximately sixty three percent of the population of domestic workers (Diaw et al. 1996: 9). Although Serer female migration patterns resemble most closely those of the Diola, culturally the Serer have become increasingly similar to the Wolof. Traditionally, the Serer were an egalitarian society, but the influence of surrounding populations that were intensely hierarchical eventually led to the adoption of a hierarchical political system. However, the hierarchical political system was not adopted uniformly, and the Serer language, some degree of animist religion, agricultural practices and family organization were maintained (Pelissier 1966: 28-29). Islamization and the proximity of Wolof and Serer villages have continued to have an effect on Serer organization and the distinction between the two is obscured where the Serer and Wolof populations have the most contact (Gellar 1995: 116). The Serer inhabit a small region within the peanut basin. Like the Wolof they have benefited from the cultivation of a cash crop; however, they were slower at implementing new farming techniques and joining the powerful Islamic brotherhoods. Initially their agricultural practices allowed them to support a larger population and they did not need to move to new areas. The Wolof, however, were beginning to move out of the older peanut basin to the northeast and were looking for new land to cultivate. They settled on lands adjacent to the Serer, and had soon taken up all available land around the Serer. The Serer region has now become the most densely populated of the peanut basin (Stomal-Weigel 1988: 19-22).

Although there is limited information on Serer migration, it does not appear to be a very old phenomenon. The Serer are reputed to have attempted resistance to other cultural influences and change and remaining in their own region facilitated this

resistance (Pelissier 1966: 29). As the Serer faced rising populations, soil depletion, and drought, the pressures to migrate could no longer be resisted. Beginning around the time of the first droughts, thirty years ago, people began to leave Serer territory. At first, this migration involved mostly young males who were migrating to the frontiers to settle new lands, but this was also the beginning of the urban migration that has now come to be an integral part of Serer rural communities (Trincaz 1989).

There does not appear to be any specific information on when Serer women began to migrate to the city, but they must have followed shortly after the men. Interestingly, unlike most other rural communities, some married women also migrate from Serer villages to Dakar. It is not clear if married women preceded or followed single women to Dakar, but most authors agree that married women began to come in the 1980s (Thiam et al. 1999: 43; Gadio and Rakowski 1995: 433). Serer women, like the Wolof, have access to their own plot of land and are responsible for the furnishing of household goods. Women, like men, were suffering from more difficult rural conditions and sought out new earning opportunities (Perrault 1996: 35-36). However, married women do not work as domestic workers; they go to the city to pound millet into flour and sell it to the urban populations. Millet flour is available in the stores, but the women have benefited from an urban preference for hand-pounded millet that has given them their own economic niche. Women who migrate are almost always part of a polygynous marriage. They migrate to the city in rotations, one remaining in the village to care for the children and to perform other domestic or agricultural tasks. When in Dakar, they have assumed the rights to a section of space along a busy intersection in the centrally located neighbourhood of Medina. In the day, the location serves as a place of business where the women pound

the millet, bargain with potential buyers, and arrange to have others deliver or sell the flour at other markets. At night, the location becomes the living area of most of the women. Women sleep under make-shift shelters or out in the open in order to economize their living expenses. Their reasons for migrating are not unlike those of single women; they cite difficult rural conditions, a desire to contribute to their family's income, and to buy clothing and household items for themselves and their children (Thiam et al. 1999).

Exactly when young single women began to migrate is uncertain, but in some communities, it has quickly become a widespread practice that clears the village of most of their female youth. There is also a tendency for Serer women to migrate at a younger age than the Diola and Wolof. The Serer migrants are the least educated, most having had little or no schooling; their departure to the city is not postponed by their education and many leave as young as ten or eleven years old (Diaw et al. 1996: 9-16). Young Serer women or girls will usually travel to the city and live with other women around their age. They may form associations or attend gatherings with others from their communities, but these tend to be less formally organized than those of the Diola. The focus of these associations is social interaction; women will gather with other women and sometimes men of their village on an informal basis to socialize and as a form of entertainment. Some contribute towards a fund that will pay for community events or village projects, but the function and formality of the associations will depend to a great extent on the initiative of the members. Most migrants maintain a strong connection to the village, visiting regularly, and a significant number return to marry and settle in the village.

Sixteen Serer women were interviewed. Most came to the city while between the ages of ten and twenty years old. Most came with other young women, sisters, cousins, or friends from the village; a few came to live with their aunt or uncle. All but one woman visit their villages regularly, usually a few to several times a year, but a few only return annually for *Tabaski.* More than half express a desire to return permanently to the village and many others say they would like to if there was work. The majority (13 out of 16) participate in gatherings with other villagers. The regularity and function of the gatherings vary, though most appear to be for social purposes and only a few women said they contributed to a collection.

Awa is single, nineteen years old and came to Dakar four years ago. She came with her older sister and lived with their cousins until recently when she took a room with four other young women from her village. They are from the same rural community and although some of the women did not know each other before they lived together, their mothers are friends and they helped make the arrangements. Her parents cultivate millet, beans, and peanuts in the village. Her mother helps her father in the fields, but does not have a plot of her own. Awa usually returns once a year for the celebration of the Virgin Mary's Assumption the fifteenth of August or when relatives are ill she will pay them a visit. She says that often life in the village is difficult and that is why girls come, to make money and help their mothers. Further, she explains, "in the village, nobody forces anyone – me to come. If you don't want to come, you can stay. But, like I have said, you see your friends who have these shoes or an outfit and you want an outfit and shoes. That is why you want to come." She sends money, clothing, and other items to her mother when she is working, not every month, but regularly. When asked if she likes Dakar she

responded, "it is good, I cannot say that it is bad because I am here." But, "the ideal is to return to the village because I only came here to work. The best is to return to the village." She continues, "I don't like it here, I only came here for work. For example, if I had a problem here, I would return to the village." The women who share the room with her go to weekly meetings with people from their village, but Awa prefers to stay home and meets informally with other villagers at their homes or they come to visit her.

There is a great deal of individual variation in the migration patterns that Serer women follow. The age at which they come, their motivations, how long they stay, and what kinds of relationships they make use of will often depend on their community of origin and the willingness of migrants in the city to organize themselves. The more recent involvement of women in migration to the city and the rapid manner in which women have become wholly incorporated into the system appears to have made it possible for women to rely on other villagers for support. However, the networks are more loosely formed than those of the Diola and they do not have the more established urban links of the Wolof. Their proximity to the village and emotional connections encourage women to visit the village often and in many cases the desire to return is strong. Rural conditions, community respect for tradition, and the relatively recent introduction of urban migration to the villages, might all combine and contribute to the desire to return and the ambivalent impressions of the city.

Diola

Diola women have a much longer history in the participation of labour migration. In the first half of the twentieth century, young single women sometimes accompanied

their brothers to other rural areas to work as agricultural labourers and to care for their brothers. They earned an income from their rights over the profits from the sale of palm nuts. At this time, women, who were responsible for the acquirement of household items, began to buy more manufactured goods, thus reinforcing their desire to earn wages. Prior to the 1950s, women had begun to migrate to Ziguinchor, the closest town, and occasionally by boat to Dakar, where some were employed as domestic workers. Soon after this, the highway joining Dakar to the Casamance region was constructed, and women migrated in ever increasing numbers. At first, women would only go for one or two years, sometimes returning for the rainy season to help with the farming, and ultimately returning to the village indefinitely once they were married (Lambert 1994: 80-83). Presently, however, more women migrate for long stretches of five to ten years and only some return permanently. Almost all women hope to marry a man from their village who migrates or occasionally an urbanite (Cormier 1985: 272; Lambert 1994: 84, 143). Seasonal migration to Dakar, either in the form of students returning for school or women who return for the rainy season to help harvest, is more common amongst the Diola than amongst other groups. In most cases, young migrants return annually in mid-August, a time when the villages come alive with the return of their youth. Celebrations and dances are held at this time, often funded and organized by the migrants (Diop 1989). The Diola also leave the village at a young age; however, the proportion of women of women under fifteen is less than among the Serer, and Diola are the most educated of the migrant domestic workers (Diaw et al. 1996: 9-16). Almost all Diola migrants belong to an association in the city that is organized according to gender, age, and the quarter (traditional division of the village) the migrant originates from (Diop 1987; Lambert

1994: 95). These associations are for social purposes, but they also collect money for organized returns to the village, the funding of celebrations in the city and the village, and for some community projects. They are considered to be important mechanisms for the control of migrants' behaviour and the maintenance of emotional and social connections to the village (Diop 1987). Young women will usually live together in shared accommodations in Dakar and, at times, their decision to go is made without the approval of their parents (Lambert 1994: 153).

Unfortunately, only four interviews with Diola women were conducted and of the four only two can be considered somewhat typical examples since one women came to Dakar after a divorce and another woman was born in Dakar, then spent some time in the village with her family before returning again to Dakar. Access to Diola women was difficult since I did not have an acquaintance who could introduce me to potential participants, and few Diola women seek employment in the street where I found other participants. However, although the information gained from the women is tentative, it generally corresponds with the outlines of Diola migrants cited above and there is good literature on female Diola migration. Other than the woman who was born in Dakar, the Diola respondents said they belong to an association that holds regular meetings, they send money to their family regularly, they visit once a year, and they live with other villagers. However, the respondent who came after her divorce lives with her brother and not other women. In addition, there is a general lack of desire to return to the village; only one woman said she would be willing to return if she married someone from her community.

Ami is a single twenty seven year old who has been in Dakar since she was sixteen. She came to Dakar with her cousins and they rent a room together. Her father is deceased and her mother remains in Casamance and continues to cultivate land, occasionally coming to Dakar to sell local products. Ami sends money to her mother during the rainy season, money that her mother uses to pay labourers in her fields. She meets with other villagers twice a month. The association includes both men and women and they collect money to organize dances and other events in the city and in the village, as well as saving for community projects. Sometimes, if a person is in need, money can be loaned for transportation to the village or to cover other expenses. Generally, she says she likes Dakar and does not plan to return to the village unless she finds a husband there. Otherwise, she visits the village once a year.

The long history of Diola migrants to Dakar has allowed for the establishment of well-organized social networks that facilitate the migrant's adaptation to the city and that reinforce social ties to the rural community. However, these same qualities of Diola migration may also have had the unintentional effect of reducing women's desires to return permanently to the village. The social networks ease their integration into the city and the long established contact with urban life has resulted in the assimilation of many urban values that make rural life appear less attractive. However, more permanent residence in the cities has not ruptured links with the village. The strong sense of a distinct cultural identity, the profound interaction of villagers in the city, and an appreciation for community loyalty have created an almost seamless link between the rural areas of Casamance and Dakar. The negative impression of rural life, however, has

meant that rural development is increasingly threatened and labour shortages are common.

Mandjack

Another participant, a Mandjack from Casamance, who would generally be subsumed into the category of Diola for administration purposes, is not included in this examination of Diola migrants. Although some Mandjack are known to migrate as domestic workers, they are a fairly small ethnic group and the practice is not widespread. Though they may have similar cultural characteristics to Diola and be categorized as the same in censuses, they do not consider themselves as Diola. Moreover, the woman who participated in this study made it clear that Mandjack do not behave like Diola and Serer when they come to Dakar. "If I have a husband my mother will come here, but our language is not like the other languages." "If you want to look for a room, you look by yourself. If you don't want to look for a room on your own, you don't get a room, you live with your parents, but you don't get a room to live with them [girls from the village]. It's not like that." She also said that relatively few young women migrate, "The Serer, they do like this, but us, we don't do this, it is not - my relative is in Dakar so I want to go to Dakar. To do what? No, no it is not like that." It is not possible to draw any conclusions from this information; there is no literature on Mandjack migration and this is the only Mandjack participant in this study, but it is useful in highlighting the distinctions made between cultural groups and their practices of migration.

Conclusion

Migration patterns and the social systems that result are outcomes of historical processes shaped by colonialism, but also by the societal values and norms of the colonized. The reproduction of the system involves human agents constantly reinterpreting or reinforcing its form, function, and meaning. Major events or minute occurrences, a change in environmental conditions, the introduction of different technologies, new ideas are only a few examples of the elements that can subtly or significantly alter the organization of the migration process. However, any transformation – or for that matter preservation - of the system occurs through a kind of cultural filter. Events, ideas, and other elements are read, interpreted, and acted upon within frameworks of understanding that embody beliefs and values.

Just as people interact with the system and influence its form, so does the system of migration influence the behaviour and actions of the people who are in some way associated with it. Migration is, of course, only one of myriad systems or processes that shape the outcome of a person's life, but in rural Senegal, it is a prevalent and powerful system that organizes the relations between people and the course of their lives. People's engagement with migration influences the organization of families, the markers and designation of status, and the manner in which such things are given meaning and reproduced.

As a system that involves the movement of people between places, migration extends the cultural space of a community and transcends apparent physical boundaries. The cultural systems that are embodied in the migrating members of rural communities

are not simply replaced by new urban systems, nor are they simply reproduced in the new location. Social interactions involving objects, symbols, ideas, and actions engage people and places distributed across migration networks providing cultural continuities; while at the same time, new situations, and indeed new social contacts transform old meanings. People and the migration system in which they are embedded are also transformed by processes that incorporate and integrate their actions and ideologies in the culture of societies in other locations. Cultural systems are not constant; they are in continual flux and clear distinctions between cultural groups are often difficult to make.

Migration, and the relocation of people into a different social space that this practice involves, does not necessarily result in the assimilation of migrants into the new cultural system. Migration can itself be a process that encourages social continuity and which reinforces cultural ideals. This is exemplified in Senegal as migration is organized around social networks and is embedded in understandings that reinforce a migrant's identification with and commitment to their community and its ideals. Nowhere is this more apparent than when considering gender. The diversity of migration patterns between groups illustrates how social and historical processes have differentially affected communities and consequently affect the process of migration.

Difficult rural conditions are cited as a cause of migration throughout Senegal, but nonetheless migration patterns vary. Women from Mande and Haal Pulaar villages do not migrate for labour despite the fact that conditions in their communities are comparable to those in Diola or Serer communities. The migration of young women is organized around ideologies of acceptable gendered behaviour. For Mande and Haal Pulaar women this does not include migration for labour. Their roles as wives and

mothers are given more cultural import than their possible roles as economic contributors within the cash economy.

Furthermore, rural women in Senegal who decide to migrate to the city will not experience this decision uniformly. The social networks that women encounter and draw upon are not the same. Wolof women rely mainly on close family ties and do not often form associations or wider village connections. Conversely, Diola and Serer women commonly form associations with people of their age from their natal villages. The Diola associations are more formal and structured with a clearly defined purpose, while Serer women have more casual associations that meet inconsistently and with varying functions. These differences are a result of the way migration, and specifically female migration, has been incorporated into these communities. The distance between Dakar and the Diola region, the community's strong sense of unique identity and ethnicity, the desire to monitor women's behaviour, and the long period migration has been practised all influence how migration is organized. Migration has become integral to Diola communities and the social system that extends to Dakar exhibits a great deal of coherence and continuity between places. Even if Diola women often prefer to live indefinitely in Dakar, the ordering of their lives remains deeply influenced by their community of origin. They do not shed the cultural expectations and worldview that framed their lives before coming to the city. Even more importantly, they remain an integral part of their community; through emotional and material connections to the village they continue to understand and evaluate their own behaviour according to the values of their community and they may in turn reinforce, not erode, the social organization of the village. This does not mean that Diola women do not integrate

themselves into urban life or that they remain completely insulated from other ethnic groups; however, their conceptualization of urban life and the meaning they give to many of their experiences remain distinct even as they adopt new cultural practices.

A rural woman in Senegal (as elsewhere) will live out her life within a cultural system that influences her behaviour. The cultural system itself is the result of historical, economic, environmental, and social processes. Colonialism, dependency on a single cash crop, the concentration of investments in urban and coastal regions, increasing population, and drought have all had adverse effects on rural areas and have promoted the movement of people. Labour migration, in communities where it is considered a feminine activity, is thus incorporated into women's understandings of what it is to be a woman. Migration patterns therefore affect all rural women. Some women may choose not to engage in the practice, but the decision to remain will also be understood in a context different from communities where female migration is not a common occurrence. For example, a young Diola woman who remains in the village might be characterized as an unfortunate figure who is unable to migrate due to familial obligations, whereas a Haal Pulaar woman who stays in her village goes un-remarked; her place is in the village, at least until she is married.

If a woman decides to migrate, she will understand and communicate her reasons for migrating according to socially acceptable ideals of what a young woman should or might do. These ideals reflect not only the needs of the community, but also the values of the community. Migration is considered worthy as an activity because it improves the situation of the migrant as well as her village of origin. The importance of aiding the community is embedded in the discourse around migration and thus reinforced as a

meaningful activity. In this study, this is evident in the most widespread reported motivation for migration, "to help the family".

Women are not only conforming to social expectations, they are actively transforming the expectations for women in their communities. They may be doing so in response to historical circumstances and in accordance with collective community ideals, but they are making choices and acting out their lives in ways that impact their future, the future of other women, and the future of their communities. Although the main reason for migration is economic, women's participation in migration also has social implications that are readily understood and manipulated by women. The ability to earn money and contribute to the family has changed the manner in which young women relate to their families. They attain status not only as wives and mothers, but also as wage earners. As wage earners, women are able to postpone marriage until they are older without facing overwhelming disapproval from their communities. As many respondents attested, they are able to refuse marriages that are unattractive to them according to their own standards of acceptability; if they are in an unwanted marriage, migration presents itself as a feasible alternative since women will still be able to fulfil their obligations as mothers.

The decision to migrate reflects women's desires to navigate the path of their lives. Migration can be understood and valued as a means to secure a better marriage partner. It is also an alternative to a livelihood in the village that some women characterize as very hard and tiring work. In some cases, women's earnings in the city allow them to resist returning to the village during the harvest season because they send money to pay for labourers in their place. When women purchase clothing, shoes,

creams, and other items, and demonstrate certain behaviour associated with the city, they are communicating and changing ideals of womanhood and negotiating their social positions in the village. While in the city, women form social organizations and networks in order to facilitate their stay and to maximize the benefits that motivated their decisions. On the other hand, strong ties to the village and participation in village-based urban associations provide women with systems of support and place women in a social context that allows them to draw from village resources and return to their communities permanently or in times of difficulty.

In this thesis, I have tried to show how rural women in Senegal relate to the migration process within a wider set of historical and socio-economic systems. Colonization imposed the market system onto rural communities and introduced a system of mono-crop agriculture that promoted internal migration and created a dependency on a single industry. After independence, government policies were slow to diversify the economy and to create profitable opportunities in the rural areas. At the same time, the population of Senegal has increased dramatically, and environmental conditions have eroded, as a series of droughts and the overuse of land in some areas have decreased agricultural production. Entrance into the market economy has also transformed expectations for people in the village. Clothing, manufactured goods, household furniture, and more permanent community infrastructure have become necessities and reinforce the demand for cash incomes.

Migration to the city has become a common response. In some communities only men migrate independently, but in other communities women also migrate, usually in search of employment as domestic workers. This work is particularly suitable for young

rural women who often lack the education or skills necessary to obtain other work and who are able to benefit from the high demand for domestic workers.

The motivations that women express for coming to Dakar describe rural conditions and the purpose of migration, but they are most valuable for revealing the values and structures that shape migration. Women migrate to help their families and buy clothes, but these motivations communicate ideals of family obligation and the desire to attain status by obtaining certain goods that have symbolic meaning.

Migrant domestic workers are active in the connection of the village and the city through their movements, the remittances and goods they send to the village, the social networks they create in the city, and in the ideals they communicate in each space. How migration and the location of migrants' lives between places is understood and expressed is apparent in the conceptualizations of urban and rural life. The ambivalent images that women describe reflect their uncertainty in the achievement of certain goals that give meaning to their activities in the city.

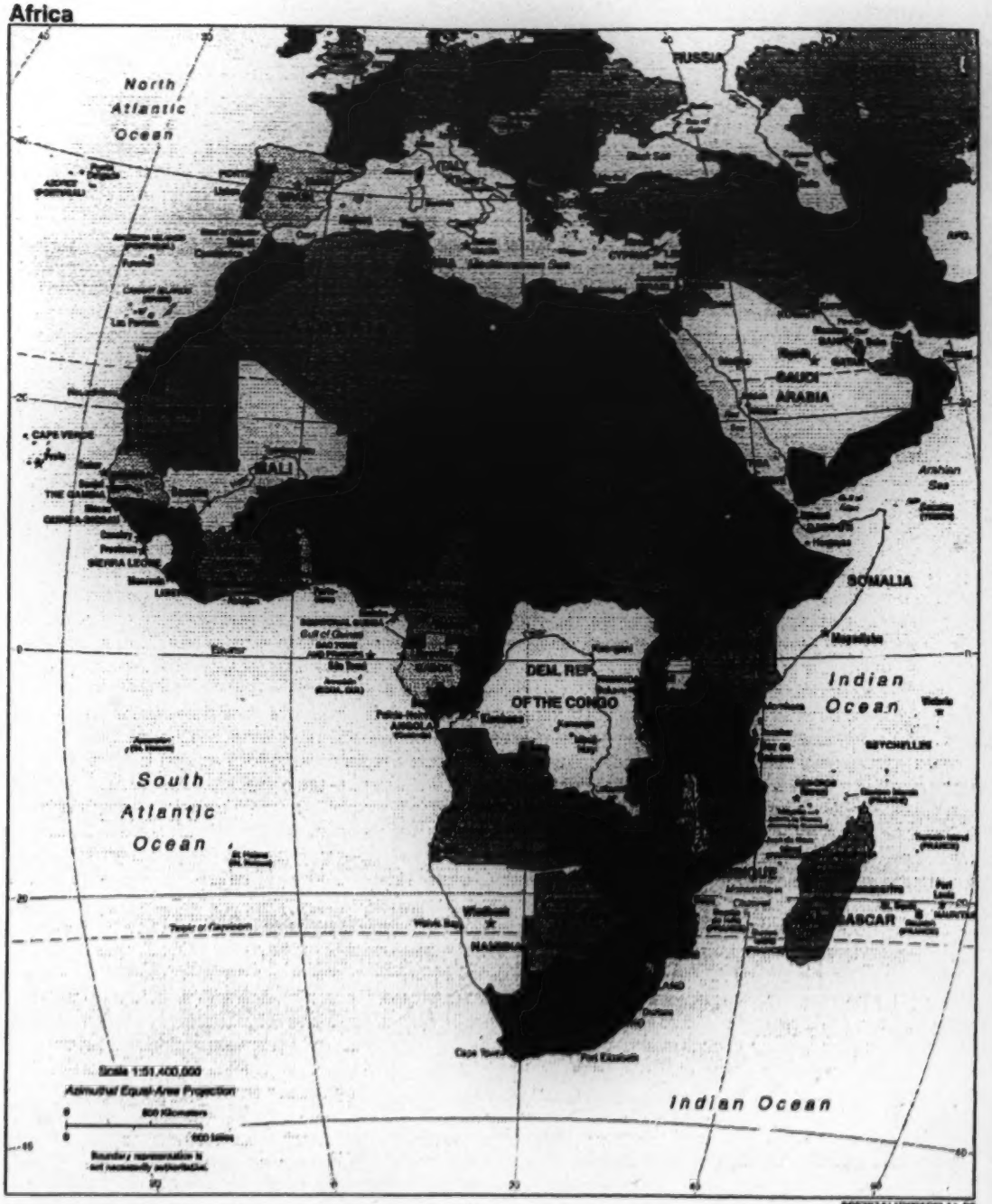
The variation that exists in the migration of women in Senegal illustrates the implications culture can have on an individual's experience. The social relations that migrant women use, their connections to the village, and their manner of organization are not uniform. These have consequences for migrant women, how they experience migration, and how their natal villages will benefit from female migration.

To conclude, migrant women in rural Senegal are actively shaping and transforming their lives and the lives of those around them. Their experiences are diverse and rich in complexity. However, their lives are also influenced by their surroundings, surroundings that are made up of relationships, social systems, historical

processes, and so on. People, families, kin groups, and perhaps even villages in Senegal are frequently many places at once. Engaged as they are in migration processes that span the rural-urban divide, the women who have occupied the attention of this study, mediate that divide; these women do so as women, and as women of their natal villages and ethnic groups. The task of a more sophisticated approach to female migration in Senegal is to see these women as agents in the migration system, and describing contemporary migratory practices accordingly. This study is one tentative step in that direction.

Figure 1

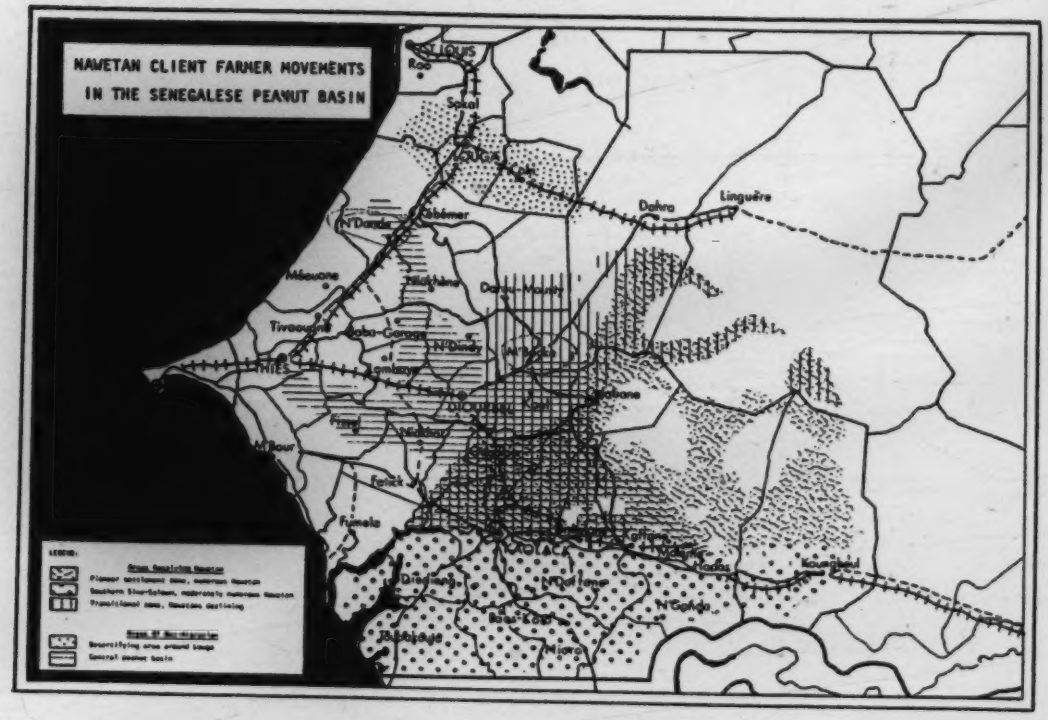
Africa



Map Courtesy of The General Libraries. The University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 2

MAP 6.1

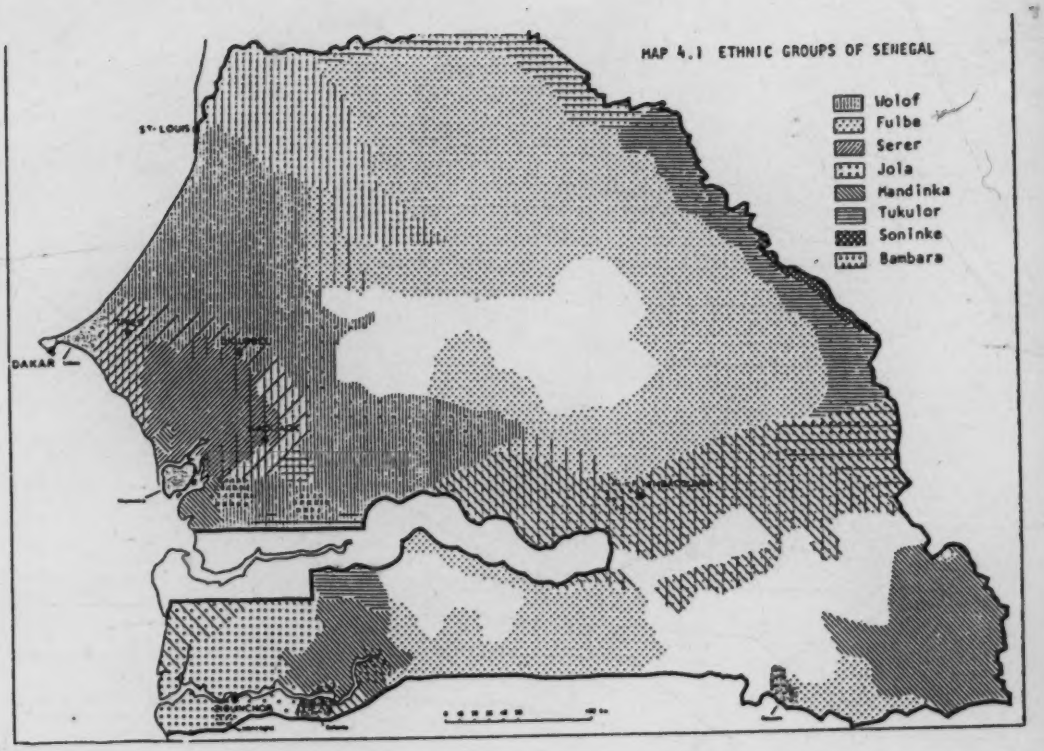


Source: *The Uprooted of the Western Sahel; Migrants' Quest for Cash in the Senegambia.* Page 143. New York: Praeger Publishers.

Figure 3

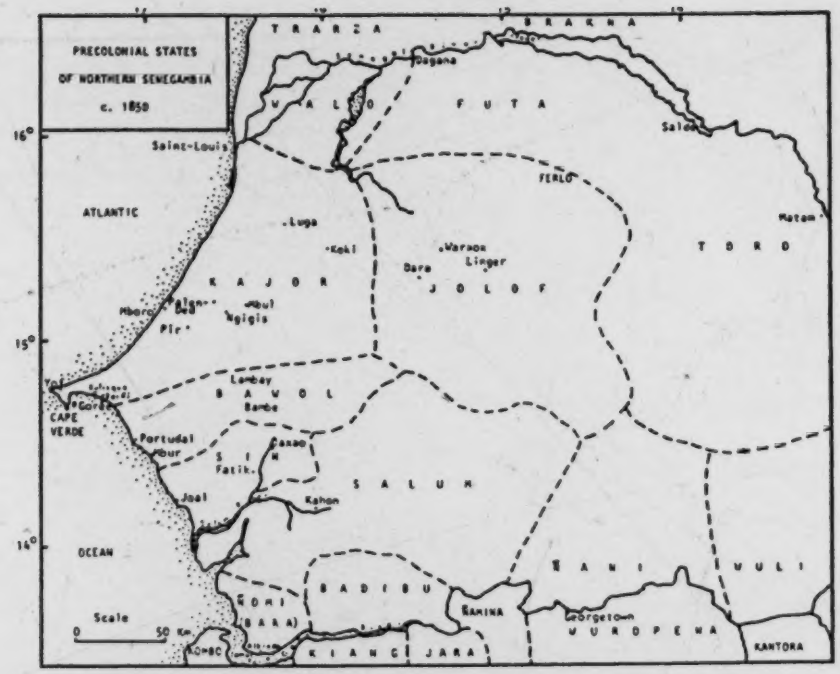
Map courtesy of The General Libraries. The University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 4



Source: Senegal, Ministry of Planning and Cooperation, Atlas pour l'aménagement du territoire (Daka: Nouvelles éditions africaines, 1977).

Figure 5



Source: Lucie Gallistel Colvin, "Kajor and Its Diplomatic Relations with Saint-Louis of Senegal, 1963-1861" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1972), p. 17.

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